THE SEA KINGS

A Pirate Movie

by

William Goldman

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FADE IN ON

An 18th century sailing ship.

Dusk. Quiet blue water. We are looking at the ship through a telescope. We follow the telescope as it moves the length of the sailing ship. One thing seems a little strange --

-- the ship we are seeing seems totally deserted. Now --

CUT TO

THE MAN HOLDING THE TELESCOPE. A TOUGH SEA CAPTAIN.

Nothing surprises this guy -- and nothing scares him either. He stands confidently on the quarterdeck of his own ship, a large trading vessel running low in the water -- in other words, loaded with cargo. A BIG NAVIGATOR moves up beside the TOUGH SEA CAPTAIN.

When they speak, it will be with what we now consider a Southern accent. According to no less an historian than Boorstin, <u>everybody</u> in America at this time -- the year is 1718 -- spoke with what we now consider a Southern accent.

BIG NAVIGATOR
(worried, hiding it)
Perhaps it was plague, sir -- a sudden plague could have taken them all.

TOUGH SEA CAPTAIN
(not worried at all; shakes his head)
Pirates.
(THE BIG NAVIGATOR looks at him)
It is a pirate trick -- dusk is their favorite time.

CUT TO

THE DESERTED SHIP. No more than a hundred yards away. Nothing moves, nothing is seen.

But it seems to be coming closer.

CUT TO

THE TOUGH SEA CAPTAIN. Experienced, skilled, he turns to the BIG NAVIGATOR.

TOUGH SEA CAPTAIN
Have you readied the cannons?

BIG NAVIGATOR
As you ordered, sir.
(he gestures)

CUT TO

HALF A DOZEN CANNONS. MANNED AND READY. One look and you can tell the crew is made up of good qualified sailors --

-- but there is still an undeniable sense of anxiety. This is all new -- they have never gone into battle against a deserted ship before.

CUT TO

THE DESERTED SHIP. And it's getting eerie now. The wind seems to be picking up.

CUT TO

THE TOUGH SEA CAPTAIN. Unruffled. THE BIG NAVIGATOR, in contrast, is getting a bit dry in the throat.

THE TWO SHIPS are imperceptibly closer than ever.

BIG NAVIGATOR
It would be a simple matter for us to alter course, Captain.

TOUGH SEA CAPTAIN
(like nails)
I -- don't -- alter -- course.

BIG NAVIGATOR
Why do you think they're doing this?

TOUGH SEA CAPTAIN
Trying to make us nervous, I expect.

BIG NAVIGATOR
(panicked)
The fools.
(and he whirls now toward the cannons)
Get ready --
(and now he whirls back to the deserted ship as we --)

CUT TO

THE DESERTED SHIP. Closer. And the sound of the wind is still rising --

-- but now, another sound is rising along with it --

-- <u>a great animal-like roar</u> --

CUT TO

THE QUARTERDECK AND THE TOUGH SEA CAPTAIN --

-- and now, except for him, the panic is starting to spread --

BIG NAVIGATOR
What is that?

TOUGH SEA CAPTAIN
(impatient)
-- nothing -- nothing at all --

And now, words come booming from the deserted ship --

GIANT VOICE (OVER)
...death or surrender...surrender or die
...The Devil demands you choose...

TOUGH SEA CAPTAIN
(shouting to his sailors who are not very happy)
This is not the Devil but only a man --
(louder)
-- prepare to fire on command --
(nod, suddenly --)

CUT TO

THE BIG NAVIGATOR, pointing, wild --

BIG NAVIGATOR
-- what is that -- WHAT IS THAT? --
(and on those words --)

CUT TO

THE TOUGH CAPTAIN, CLOSE UP, and this is really a shocker because he doesn't look tough anymore, just suddenly ashen and scared. As he stares --

CUT TO

THE DESERTED SHIP, only it's not deserted now, because a LARGE FIGURE has just appeared in the semi-darkness, and this is him, this is the pirate we've all seen in our imaginations, the man who the greatest writer on piracy ever described as being a figure who frightened America more than any comet and

CUT TO

THE TOUGH CAPTAIN ON HIS QUARTERDECK.

TOUGH CAPTAIN
(whispered -- to the BIG NAVIGATOR)
...run up the white flag...
(beat)
...it's Blackbeard...
(and on that name --)

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD, standing in the growing darkness and as the trading ship raises the white flag of surrender, he raises his arms and releases a wild cry of triumph and --

-- and FREEZE.

Because this was really a remarkable creature, and it's important that we have an understanding of why his legend grew.

In the first place, he was phenomenally strong, capable of enduring practically anything. And maybe no one in history consumed more rum than Blackbeard. A prodigious drinker.

He was also no fool. He sensed that the golden days of piracy were winding down, and it drove him constantly to somehow try to get out alive and rich while it was still possible. And although he didn't invent psychological warfare, he certainly understood it and its uses. That is made totally clear in the way he prepared for battle -- no one ever, before or since, used physical appearance the way he did.

You have to begin with the beard. It grew long and he left it untrimmed, and it came high on his face, to not far below his eyes. And before battle, he would braid it, and tie little ribbons in it. And some of the longer braids he would throw over his shoulders. Then he would take a bandoleer and place it across his shoulders and in it he had six loaded pistols. Not to mention a wide belt, with additional pistols and knives.

And his cutlass was probably the largest ever used -- some say it weighed ten pounds, and only a man with his power could have swung the thing. And he wore that at his waist too.

But the final touch was what most made him seem supernatural. He would take long match-like pieces of rope, slow burning, and he tucked them under his hat. He liked dusk, for then, just before battle, he would light these slow-burning ropes and stand ready for battle, armed like something out of Homer, these flames near his face, flickering across his dark eyes, wispy curls of smoke circling his head.

No one ever much wanted to go into action against him. Cowards went to pieces, brave men simply folded up in silence.

He was, all in all, something to behold. And from beholding him, as we have been for awhile, slowly --

CUT TO

A SATCHEL FULL OF MONEY BEING OPENED.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

We are in an architect's office in Barbados on a beautiful Caribbean afternoon. THREE MEN are present.

MR. TULLEY is the architect, slender and fussy. He is standing by a large ink drawing pinned to a wall. The drawing is of a beautiful sleek-looking sailing ship.

Standing by the door is MR. WALPOLE.

Mid-50's, a big man, American. MR. WALPOLE is STEDE BONNET's servant and has raised BONNET since he was a child. He is extremely smart, well spoken, and always, no matter what the situation, calm.

The third man is our other legend. Or rather, soon will be.

STEDE BONNET at this point in his life was known for but one thing: a phenomenal ability to make money. Mid-thirties, attractive, charming, educated, witty, self deprecating.

He seems settled. He is not.

He seems contented. He is not.

No one has ever been able to explain what BONNET was shortly to do. Most explain it away as some form of madness. Could have been. A suicidal urge that took control of him. Could have been that too.

Or perhaps it was just this: he had never been, in his own eyes, daring. Or romantic. Or heroic.

And he wanted to be.

Even if it killed him...

All right -- now we know who our Main Men are. Time to get going.

TULLEY
(proudly pointing to the drawing)
There it is, Major Bonnet, my masterpiece -- the fastest ship in the Caribbean. In truth, I hate to part with it.

BONNET takes some money from the satchel, puts it on TULLEY's desk.

TULLEY
(eyeing the cash)
Of course, somehow I'll manage to get over the loss.

(MORE)

TULLEY (contd)
(as BONNET puts more money on the desk, TULLEY indicates for him to stop)
That's enough, Major, you've more than paid in full.

BONNET
This is for cannons, Mr. Tulley.

TULLEY
(a bit surprised)
Well, of course, if you desire a cannon for your trading ship, a cannon you shall have --

BONNET
(cutting in)
-- twelve cannons -- twelve of the most powerful.

Now TULLEY is really surprised.

MR. WALPOLE might be surprised too -- but of course, nothing shows on his face.

TULLEY
Very well. Now all that remains is the choosing of a name. Might I suggest something graceful -- the Sea Swan, perhaps? The Flying Cloud?

CUT TO

BONNET. CLOSE UP.

BONNET
(sharply)
The Revenge!
(and as he turns, heads for the door)

CUT TO

THE DOOR. MR. WALPOLE already had it opened.

TULLEY
Doesn't that seem a bit aggressive for a trading ship?

BONNET
Yes, doesn't it?...
(and as they leave --)

CUT TO

BONNET AND MR. WALPOLE, leaving the architect's building, going next door to a framer's. BONNET goes in --

-- but only for a moment.

Now here he comes back out, carrying a slender rectangular package covered by a cloth.

But even though he was gone for but a blink, BONNET seems different: something has moved him.

MR. WALPOLE of course notices this; but of course nothing shows.

CUT TO

A BREATHTAKING VIEW OF THE CARIBBEAN.

BONNET is being driven home by MR. WALPOLE. Their lovely carriage is open to the sky, the sun streams down, there's a light breeze. The road runs close to the water.

MR. WALPOLE flicks expertly at the horse.

BONNET sits in back, studying his purchase. It's a painting -- the cloth is off -- but we can't see what it is a painting of yet.

But clearly BONNET is transfixed by it.

MR. WALPOLE
Almost home, sir.

BONNET
Home -- was there ever an uglier word?

MR. WALPOLE
I shall refrain from commenting on that.

BONNET
Very well -- but I should think you'd at least have the decency to wonder what it is I'm looking at.

MR. WALPOLE
I assumed, from its shape, that more than likely it was a painting.

BONNET
Look.

He shows it to MR. WALPOLE -- we still haven't seen it.

BONNET (contd)
Is it not magnificent? And also, I am assured, accurate in every detail.

MR. WALPOLE
Who is it?

BONNET
Why, Blackbeard, of course.

MR. WALPOLE
(beat)
The pirate?

CUT TO

BONNET. Proudly. Staring at it.

BONNET
The God, Mr. Walpole, the God.

And now, at last, we see the painting --

-- and it is BLACKBEARD, of course but here's the thing: it doesn't remotely resemble him. It's a totally glamorized version, like a publicity shot from an Errol Flynn picture. This BLACKBEARD wears a perfectly clean white lacy silk shirt with billowing sleeves. His pants look like they were cut by a custom tailor. His boots glisten.

BONNET (contd)
(so soft)
...now it begins...

MR. WALPOLE
Pardon, sir?

But BONNET does not reply. Transfixed, he reaches out, touches the painting, as if to make sure it was real. Because, for BONNET, it was real -- he believed in the romance of piracy, never the reality.

As BONNET continues to stare at the painting --

CUT TO

MR. WALPOLE, turning the carriage into BONNET's home -- by far the most magnificent on the island. As he does this --

MAN'S VOICE (OVER)
(not happy)
He's back.

WOMAN'S VOICE (OVER)
(the same)
So soon?

The words are coming from a second floor room. So now we

CUT TO

Inside a second floor drawing room and TWO PEOPLE, A MAN AND A WOMAN, looking out at BONNET being driven across the grounds by MR. WALPOLE.

THE MAN IS GOVERNOR ADAM WINTHROP. A very powerful, vigorous man of 45. A leader of men, with a commanding presence. WINTHROP has the assured arrogance of someone who has been successful at everything.

THE WOMAN IS BONNET'S WIFE SUSAN.

A knockout. 25. She lights up rooms.

We don't know their relationship yet -- but clearly their emotions run very deep.

WINTHROP
The thought of my leaving you alone with him again --

SUSAN
(her hand to his lips)
-- I don't even want to think about your leaving.

WINTHROP
But you must. Susan -- what are you going to do?

SUSAN
(shakes her head)
It's very hard.

CUT TO

WINTHROP. He takes her hand, leads her across the beautifully appointed room to a sofa.

WINTHROP
(as they sit)
It isn't hard at all. You must leave your husband. And soon. And come back to Virginia. To me.
(he looks at her)
So we can be together.
(a glance at the window)
I detest him so.

SUSAN
He's been kind enough.

WINTHROP
(sharply)
If he hadn't been, I'd have killed him.
(beat)
I'd like to, and hopefully, I may yet.

SUSAN
Don't ever say that.

CUT TO

WINTHROP. CLOSE UP. The wound still burns.

WINTHROP
He stole you! From me. Don't you understand, in my entire life, I'd never lost before.

CUT TO

SUSAN, looking at him. She cares for WINTHROP so.

SUSAN
I was very young. And he was very glamorous in his soldier's uniform.
(beat)
I needed to prove to myself I didn't need your strength to survive.
(sadly)
I was so wrong.
(WINTHROP smiles)
Will you forgive me when I return?

WINTHROP
(the smile lingers)
You never left me...

CUT TO

SUSAN AND WINTHROP; they sit facing each other on the sofa, in silent adoration. HOLD briefly then --

CUT TO

THE DINING ROOM OF BONNET'S ESTATE. Candlelit and gorgeous. The meal is coming to an end. BONNET is the same as when we met him.

But WINTHROP is drunk and dangerous. SUSAN, brittle and cold. MR. WALPOLE, serving, is impervious to it all.

There is a lot of tension in the air.

MR. WALPOLE
(with a silver platter -- to BONNET)
More fish, sir?

SUSAN
(as BONNET indicates "no")
As you well know, Mr. Walpole, I detest fish --

(MORE)

SUSAN (contd)
(beat)
-- the fact that Mrs. Bonnet insists on serving it at every meal is but another sign of her caring --
(sweet smile to her)
-- she's helping to keep me trim.

CUT TO

MR. WALPOLE now moves to the sideboard, picks up a cut glass wine decanter. BONNET doesn't want that either.

WINTHROP
(very drunk)
At least you could drink.

BONNET
Spoils the exquisite flavor of the fish.

WINTHROP
Was that meant to be clever? I don't find you clever.

BONNET
You must think of me as an acquired taste.

CUT TO

WINTHROP. He downs his wine, gestures to MR. WALPOLE for more but MR. WALPOLE has anticipated the request as he always does. WINTHROP grabs the decanter from him, pours for himself.

WINTHROP
As you both know, I'm returning to Virginia tomorrow.
(looks at SUSAN)
What you don't know is this: I shall never come back to Barbados again.
(and on that --)

CUT TO

SUSAN. Distraught. She reaches out to WINTHROP.

SUSAN
Oh Father, don't say that.

Whoops -- we didn't know they were father and daughter 'til now.

CUT TO

BONNET, watching them.

BONNET
Heartbreaking as that news may be, Governor Winthrop, I understand -- Barbados is a long journey.

WINTHROP
No, no -- it's not the journey, it's what I find when I get here. She used to be <u>perfect</u> -- I made her that way --

BONNET
What are you saying? -- on my watch, she's flipped to divine?

WINTHROP
Don't you <u>ever</u> mock my daughter --
(manages to stand)

CUT TO

WINTHROP. And sure he's drunk, but he's also very powerful. And malevolent.

WINTHROP
-- you're nothing but rich, you know that, Bonnet? I could demean you all night and you'd just hide behind your money.
(beat)
But my time will come.
(to SUSAN)
If I stay, I'll do damage.
(and he lurches out)

BONNET
(staring after him)
That man can certainly hold his liquor.

SUSAN
You're not fit to insult my father.

BONNET
Now you? -- what in the world have I ever done to you? I've given you every single thing you've ever asked for.

SUSAN
Children?

BONNET
(outraged)
You detest children -- you're always saying how messy they are.

SUSAN
That's beside the point.
(throws down her napkin)
Thank God at least my father is a man.

(and she dashes out after
WINTHROP)

CUT TO

MR. WALPOLE, picking up the napkin, folding it neatly.

BONNET
One of our more pleasant meals, don't you agree?

MR. WALPOLE
(nods)
Actually, the Governor seemed almost cheery.
(decanter in hand)
Some wine, sir?

BONNET
Brandy, Mr. Walpole, and just bring me the bottle.
(as MR. WALPOLE moves to the sideboard)
I was told recently that in central France there's a family more horrid than mine. Do you think it possible?

MR. WALPOLE
(giving him the brandy)
God moves in mysterious ways.
(beat)
Is there anything else, sir?

CUT TO

BONNET. And something is going on behind his eyes.

BONNET
(cautious)
Actually...there is...
(takes a long swig of brandy, glances around)
But not here.
(and as he rises, gestures for MR. WALPOLE to follow --)

CUT TO

Of all things, A LARGE TREE HOUSE.

Built high in a large tree. Beyond, the Caribbean glistens in the moonlight.

BONNET is helping MR. WALPOLE up the last few steps.

BONNET
Remember when you built this?

MR. WALPOLE
(he does)
You were five.

BONNET
Remember why?

MR. WALPOLE
(he does that too)
You needed a place for your imagination.

They're both up now. It's really terrific -- a couple of wooden chairs, railing all around. MR. WALPOLE sits. BONNET stares out at the night.

CUT TO

BONNET. CLOSE UP. A marvelous looking young man.

BONNET
I'm on the verge of suicide, Mr. Walpole.

CUT TO

MR. WALPOLE, watching him.

MR. WALPOLE
(softly)
I know.

CUT TO

THE TWO OF THEM AS BONNET moves close, takes the other chair.

BONNET
So I've decided that rather than kill myself, I'm going to have someone else do it for me.
(beat)
But gloriously -- heroically, if possible.

MR. WALPOLE
And how does the Major plan to accomplish that?

BONNET
(and he cannot contain his excitement)
I am going to stop being the richest man for a thousand miles and plan to take up piracy -- The Revenge will be my ship, the painting my guiding star -- I plan to become the scourge of the Caribbean!

MR. WALPOLE
Begging your pardon, Major, but won't your seasickness be a problem?

BONNET
I'll have to work on that, you're right, and mock me all you want, my mind is firm.

MR. WALPOLE
I don't think many would agree with that assessment.

BONNET
This winter when the typhoid attacked? --

MR. WALPOLE
-- I thought I'd lost you.

CUT TO

BONNET, standing now, moving to the rail.

BONNET
I decided then. If I survived I would act -- and when I did, I commissioned the ship and the portrait. I've read every book on piracy, memorized every battle.
(beat -- soft now)
I have to do this -- my life is bookwork, my marriage, on its best days, grotesque, I who have always craved adventure have none --

MR. WALPOLE
-- you did well in the Army.

BONNET
(turning on him)
But I never saw action.
(taking MR. WALPOLE's hand)
We are launched, Mr. Walpole.

MR. WALPOLE
(pulling his hand back)
I don't understand your use of the pronoun.

BONNET
It has to be "we" -- you've always hired my staff for me -- I will need fifty of the finest cutthroats and I will pay absolutely top wages.

CUT TO

MR. WALPOLE. He hasn't decided.

MR. WALPOLE
These are dangerous men doing dangerous work.

CUT TO

BONNET. CLOSE UP. Eyes bright --

BONNET
I have no fear -- if I can die bravely, I die with a smile --
(his arms go wide, embracing the night)
-- and I will be remembered...
(HOLD ON BONNET. Now, as the sound of a gunshot explodes --)

CUT TO

SUSAN BONNET, a pistol in her hands, and very unhappy.

It's night and we're on the large curving staircase of the mansion. MRS. BONNET is near the top with the weapon, while BONNET, dressed for travel is moving to the bottom.

SUSAN
(aiming at his head)
One more step and you die.

BONNET
(taking a step)
Fire away.

SUSAN
(hesitates, then turns the pistol on herself)
All right, one more step and I die --

BONNET
And muss your powder? Not likely.

SUSAN
But you can't leave me --

BONNET
-- aren't you desperate to leave me? --

SUSAN
-- of course, but that's different, you're horrible -- who will I torment if you're gone?

BONNET
(shrugs)
You should have developed other hobbies --
(MORE)

BONNET (contd)
(another step)
-- now I've left you pots of money and I'm sure the Governor is salivating --

CUT TO

MR. WALPOLE, also dressed for travel, hurrying in the front door --

MR. WALPOLE
-- the carriage is packed, sir -- we really must go or we'll miss the tide.
(as he leaves)

CUT TO

BONNET. A step back toward her.

BONNET
Goodbye, Susan. Now don't be sad -- I want to see your wonderful smile.

SUSAN
What have I got to smile about?

BONNET
Your memories, silly -- remember how much you detest me?

SUSAN
True.

BONNET
And despise my touch?

SUSAN
(nods)
Clammy.

BONNET
Aren't you feeling better already? Of course you are --
(beat)
-- and best of all, the world is full of fine young men you can destroy.

CUT TO

SUSAN. And guess what, she's smiling. As he leaves --

SUSAN
There is that...
(and from her glorious face --)

CUT TO

THE CARRIAGE OUTSIDE -- MR. WALPOLE has the reins -- BONNET leaps gracefully up beside him -- on fire.

BONNET
I am agreed, Mr. Walpole -- the world is mine! --
(huge)
-- I am a force of nature now!
(then, suddenly he looks lost)
Oh damn. Just...damn.

MR. WALPOLE
For a force of nature, you seem a trifle shaky.

BONNET
(embarrassed)
I forgot my seasickness medicine.
(MR. WALPOLE calmly hands him a bottle, starts to drive)
Mr. Walpole, you are perfection.
(beat)
And I am a pirate king. Onward!
(and off they go into the future, MR. WALPOLE handling the reins, BONNET chugging his medicine...HOLD)

CUT TO

THE SEA -- pitching and rolling --

-- we are watching it through a porthole and clearly we are a long way from shore. This is not storm weather at all -- but the waters are definitely not smooth.

There is the sound of groaning: THE PIRATE KING is in agony.

CUT TO

BONNET lying in bed, surrounded by maps and reading matter. He is kind of greenish in hue, but fighting it as best he can. (BONNET was, by the way, at least at the start, world class seasick.)

This is his stateroom -- and it's neat and not small -- but it's a considerable contrast from his mansion.

CUT TO

MR. WALPOLE, as he knocks, enters quickly --

MR. WALPOLE
Sir --

BONNET
-- I simply cannot move at the moment, please don't bother me again.

MR. WALPOLE
Have you taken today's medicine?

BONNET
I am well into next week's, I promise you.

MR. WALPOLE
The crew needs to see you, Major -- we have been at sea a day and a half and there is a growing curiosity --

BONNET
-- I can't meet them like this.

MR. WALPOLE
(stern)
You can -- and you will!

CUT TO

BONNET. Surprised, trying to obey -- he manages to half sit.

MR. WALPOLE
(now quietly)
Lookout has spotted a ship on the horizon -- coming our way.

BONNET
(throat dry)
We're going into battle?

BONNET
And you are going to lead us.

BONNET manages to stand now -- reaching out to the wall for support.

BONNET (contd)
Mr. Walpole...
(his nervousness is clear)
What if I make a fool of myself?

MR. WALPOLE
(having none of it)
Oh, you will make a fool of yourself, I have total confidence in you.
(beat)
I just hope the crew doesn't mutiny.
(and on the word "mutiny")

CUT TO

GLASS EYE IN CLOSE UP -- the first member of BONNET'S PIRATES

we've met -- he's standing on the quarterdeck and he's scary as hell, what with the glass eye and scars all over his face --

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

A BUNCH OF OTHER PIRATES and here's the shocker: GLASS EYE is the cutest of any of them. I mean, these guys are monsters. (Pirates were, by the way, if they were alive and sober, in very good shape. They needed to be to last in their occupation which was dangerous, exhausting and would have been murder on any insurance company. One in three died on duty. Disease got a lot of others while they were ashore.)

Anyway, these dozen or so cutthroats on the quarterdeck are all dressed in work clothes; faded, torn and resewn, old, but sturdy, not very clean.

And they also are, at this moment, dazed, as we

CUT TO

BONNET coming on deck for the first time: he looks like the pirate in the painting: billowing silk shirt, spotlessly clean; you name it, he's wearing it and it's new and expensive. MR. WALPOLE, dressed as always, is a half step behind.

CUT TO

THE CUTTHROATS. This is their captain? A little wave of uncertainty begins to be noticeable.

CUT TO

BONNET, addressing his troops --

BONNET
Avast, me hearties --

CUT TO

THE CUTTHROATS. What the hell is he talking about?

CUT TO

BONNET, quickly sizing up the situation --

BONNET
-- listen, everybody --
(that's better; they nod)
-- I always issue unlimited rum before battle.

CUT TO

THE CUTTHROATS. That's a lot better. As jugs of rum begin to appear --

CUT TO

BONNET, moving toward MR. WALPOLE who stands by the tiller and the flagpole, staring out --

CUT TO

A LARGE SHIP, under full sail, some distance away.

CUT TO

BONNET. Suddenly raising his voice --

BONNET
Topman!
(and now as he looks up --)

CUT TO

A GASPING SHOT -- it's the first time we've seen BONNET's ship in daylight from on high -- the TOPMAN is a lookout maybe a hundred feet in the air -- and we can see the whole thing now, the great sails filled with wind, and the deck far below, and all the pirate activity, and below that, the water itself, blue and clear but rough as hell -- there are whitecaps and the TOPMAN is weaving with the ship as he clings to his perch.

TOPMAN
(down to BONNET)
Yes, Captain --

BONNET
(a tiny figure by the tiller)
What nationality?

TOPMAN
(he has a small telescope)
She flies the French flag.

CUT TO

BONNET, to MR. WALPOLE:

BONNET
My flag box, please.
(and as WALPOLE hands it over --)

CUT TO

THE FLAG BOX as BONNET flips it open -- the thing is full of flags of various sizes and colors, representing all the nationalities that sail anywhere in the vicinity -- Spanish, English, French, Portuguese, Dutch --

CUT TO

BONNET, taking a flag, showing it to MR. WALPOLE.

BONNET
The French flag.
(WALPOLE nods -- louder)
Fly it high.

CUT TO

THE FLAGPOLE with its ropes as MR. WALPOLE begins to get the flag properly set --

BONNET
Upside down, Mr. Walpole, it must be upside down.

MR. WALPOLE
Why?

BONNET
To show we're in distress.

CUT TO

THE FRENCH FLAG, upside down, flying in the breeze.

CUT TO

THE CAPTAIN'S DECK. There has been, since BONNET's appearance on deck, constant music, played by a fiddle, a trumpet and a flute. (MUSICIANS were an important part of a pirate crew. The boredom of waiting days with no quarry in sight was helped enormously by the presence of the musicians.)

BONNET
Musicians.

CUT TO

THE THREE OF THEM. They pause in their rhythmic playing.

CUT TO

BONNET, instructing them.

BONNET
I don't think we should be so cheery, since we're in distress. Perhaps, at least for awhile, silence might be in order.
(the MUSICIANS nod and --)

CUT TO

THE FRENCH SHIP. Much nearer now -- less than half a mile away, steadily approaching through the rough seas and

CUT TO

BONNET AND WALPOLE, watching. Tension is high and growing. MR. WALPOLE is clearly very nervous.

BONNET
Relax. There will be no battle.

MR. WALPOLE
(indicating the French ship)
Are they aware of that, sir?

BONNET
(explaining)
Once they know the situation, they will be most aware. Cargo vessels do not care to fight pirates -- the cargo isn't theirs and, if they do fight, and they lose, they face pirate vengeance.

MR. WALPOLE
And they don't want to face that?

BONNET
Now you have it.
(and as he leaves a somewhat relieved WALPOLE --)

CUT TO

THE PIRATES, moving stealthily, keeping their bodies low and out of sight as much as possible below the eye line of the high solid railings of the ship. (The bulwarks of a pirate ship were always high. Bulwarks, a solid part of a ship's side extending like a fence above the level of the deck -- had openings for the cannons to fire through. But until battle, these were kept shut.)

CUT TO

MORE PIRATES -- up to four per cannon, moving toward their guns, carrying extra powder, cannonballs and the silence and tension increases. BONNET is with them, helping them to carry.

CUT TO

MORE PIRATES, lugging great heavy wooden tubs filled with water. BONNET is helping here now and something is coming clear -- the man is strong.

CUT TO

STILL MORE, BONNET among them, carrying blankets and as the wooden water tubs are put down, they place the blankets into the water, soaking them and everything's really getting taut now. BONNET goes back to MR. WALPOLE.

CUT TO

THE FRENCH SHIP, less than a quarter-mile away and closing and

CUT TO

BONNET AND MR. WALPOLE.

BONNET
(whispering)
Admit it -- this is more exciting than the sugar plantation.

MR. WALPOLE
(throat dry)
I will do no such thing.

BONNET
Look -- when they're close, we'll simply run up the Jolly Roger and they'll run up the white flag and surrender.

CUT TO

THE DECK, all the pirates crouched in silence by their cannons and

CUT TO

THE FRENCH SHIP, moving on and

CUT TO

BONNET, by his flag box again and as he reaches in --

CUT TO

What he's reached for: The black pirate flag with the skull and crossbones, the Jolly Roger itself.

CUT TO

BONNET AND THE JOLLY ROGER. He looks at it a moment, then thrusts it to MR. WALPOLE.

MR. WALPOLE
Upside down or right-side up?

BONNET
Either way I'm sure they'll understand.

CUT TO

MR. WALPOLE, busying himself with the flag and

CUT TO

THE PIRATES watching and

CUT TO

THE MUSICIANS watching and

CUT TO

MR. WALPOLE, his heart in his mouth as we

CUT TO

THE JOLLY ROGER rising high into the air and the moment it's visible --

CUT TO

THE FRENCH SHIP, blasting all their cannons toward Bonnet and

CUT TO

BONNET amazed and stunned as a French shell lands on deck nearby with a tremendous crash and flames immediately break out and

CUT TO

SOME PIRATES BY THE WATER TUBS, grabbing the soaked blankets, running forward and shouting, starting to battle the flames and

CUT TO

THE FRENCH SHIP -- another broadside and

CUT TO

BONNET'S DECK as another French shell lands, more flames begin and

CUT TO

ANOTHER BUNCH OF PIRATES WITH BLANKETS running toward the flames and it's really getting noisy and wild now and

CUT TO

BONNET, rushing to GLASS EYE by the tiller -- gesturing behind the French ship.

BONNET
Get behind them --

GLASS EYE
(confused)
-- you want to run?

BONNET
-- I want to get behind them -- that's an order!

CUT TO

MR. WALPOLE. Watching. Impressed.

MR. WALPOLE
(quietly -- so GLASS EYE can't hear)
Do you know what you're doing, sir?

BONNET
(loud -- so GLASS EYE cannot help but hear)
I know exactly what I'm doing.
(but he shows MR. WALPOLE his fingers -- which are crossed)

CUT TO

THE MAIN DECK OF THE FRENCH SHIP. THE CAPTAIN AND THE FIRST MATE watch as The Revenge turns away --

FIRST MATE
(pointing)
They flee.

FRENCH CAPTAIN
(but of course)
We are French.

CUT TO

THE REVENGE. The pirates are winning their battles with the fires.

CUT TO

THE TWO SHIPS. They seem more separated now. Then --

CUT TO

BONNET AND WALPOLE WITH GLASS EYE.

BONNET
Commence turning.
(GLASS EYE spins the tiller)

CUT TO

THE FRENCH SHIP watching The Revenge.

FIRST MATE
(pointing)
Why do they turn?

FRENCH CAPTAIN
Pirates did not become pirates because they are smart.

CUT TO

THE REVENGE -- THE CREW is kind of interested in just what the hell is happening.

CUT TO

BONNET, starting to get excited. The Revenge is soon going to be directly behind the French ship -- but of course, they're a good distance behind. GLASS EYE is clearly an expert sailor. MR. WALPOLE is totally confused.

MR. WALPOLE
Why do we want to be so far behind them?

BONNET
We don't -- we want to be very close behind them -- at which point we shall blast the shit out of them.

MR. WALPOLE
And why don't they do that to us first?

BONNET
Because trade ships don't have cannons facing that way -- they assume once they are safely in front, they will stay safely in front.
(now he throws his head back)
Watch -- Topman --
(beat)
Full sail!

CUT TO

THE VIEW FROM THE TOPMAN'S ROOST AS SUDDENLY SOMETHING WONDERFUL HAPPENS --

-- new sails unfurl all over --

-- pirates scamper across high above, securing them.

A beautiful sight indeed --

-- then zap -- the sails fill with wind and

CUT TO

THE DECK OF THE REVENGE as suddenly the great ship kicks into overdrive -- it's not like jet skis, but you know you are going <u>fast</u>.

CUT TO

BONNET AND MR. WALPOLE by the tiller.

GLASS EYE
(wow)
Jesus.

BONNET
(and he's proud)
My idea, Mr. Walpole -- this did not become the fastest ship on the seas totally by accident.

CUT TO

THE TWO SHIPS AND THE REVENGE is flying.

CUT TO

THE FRENCH SHIP.

FRENCH CAPTAIN
(staring back)
They can't do that.
(but they can as we find out when we --)

CUT TO

THE REVENGE, closing fast and

BONNET, a hand on the rigging, calling out --

BONNET
Musicians --
(THE MUSICIANS look at him)
-- play something optimistic --
(and with that he starts to climb -- ten feet, fifteen --)

CUT TO

THE REVENGE -- it hits a big wave --

CUT TO

BONNET as the ship pitches -- and the seasickness returns to his face -- he battles it, climbs on.

CUT TO

THE TWO SHIPS and THE REVENGE is almost on top of it and

CUT TO

BONNET, studying the French ship for just a moment, then --

BONNET

Fire!
(and as the guns blast deafeningly --)

CUT TO

THE DECK OF THE FRENCH SHIP -- for just a moment, all seems in perfect control and order -- but only for a moment. Because right then BONNET'S CANNONBALL blasts the main mast, splintering it and as it starts to teeter --

CUT TO

THE FRENCH CAPTAIN, stunned, staring at the mast and

CUT TO

THE FRENCH CREW, and all firing stops, everything stops as they all stare at the thick teetering mast and

CUT TO

THE MAST, supporting the crucial sails of the ship, and now it starts to waver more and more and

CUT TO

THE WHOLE GODDAM FRENCH CREW, abandoning positions and starting to run like crazy out of the way and

CUT TO

THE MAST, wavering worse now and there is the cracking sound of wood as the added pressure splinters the whole goddam mast and

CUT TO

THE OFFICERS, TEARING ONE WAY AND ANOTHER UNTIL WE

CUT TO

THE GIANT MAST AS IT FALLS with a crash like nothing you've ever heard and from that giant thing going down --

CUT TO

A LITTLE THING GOING UP -- it's a white flag, the surrender sign and the second it makes its appearance --

CUT TO

BONNET'S PIRATES, hollering in wild triumph and from that --

CUT TO

BONNET, high above them all, staring out at what he's wrought.

BONNET
(in awe)
...my God, it worked...
(HOLD ON THAT MOMENT. Then --)

CUT TO

THE TWO SHIPS LASHED TOGETHER. BONNET'S MEN are finishing hauling bails and barrels full of captured material onto their ship.

CUT TO

BONNET on his quarterdeck as GLASS EYE comes over.

GLASS EYE
We stripped 'em clean, Captain.

BONNET
Then cast off.
(as GLASS EYE nods, turns --)

CUT TO

BONNET addressing his pirate crew -- the sun is higher, it's later in the day.

BONNET
In honor of our most excellent beginning,
I order you all to drink until you fall
unconscious --
(before a cheer can start --)

VOICE (OVER)
-- Captain, sir?

BONNET
What?
(and we --)

CUT TO

THE TOPMAN in the highest sails --

TOPMAN
Dutch ship on the horizon, heading this way.

CUT TO

BONNET, surprised.

BONNET
So soon?
(turns to MR. WALPOLE)
My flag box, please.
(now, quickly --)

CUT TO

A DUTCH FLAG being raised, upside down and

CUT TO

THE DUTCH SHIP, much closer and

CUT TO

THE UPSIDE DOWN DUTCH FLAG BEING REPLACED BY THE JOLLY ROGER and

CUT TO

THE DUTCH SHIP RUNNING UP THE WHITE FLAG OF SURRENDER and now

CUT TO

THE HOLD OF BONNET'S SHIP. The place is jammed! Full of barrels and bales of spices and sugar and tobacco and hides and silks and perfumes and linen and cotton and ivory and tea and opium. There's not an empty square foot left.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

BONNET AND MR. WALPOLE, staring at their spoils. MR. WALPOLE is impressed. BONNET is subdued.

MR. WALPOLE
What's wrong?

BONNET
(whispering)
I don't know how to proceed next. We've been at sea two weeks, we've captured five ships, but I don't know a fence.

MR. WALPOLE
A what?

BONNET
(snappishly)
A fence, a fence, don't you know anything at all about how pirates talk? Someone who disposes of stolen goods.

MR. WALPOLE
Ask Glass Eye, he must know one.

BONNET
(appalled)
And betray my ignorance? Impossible. You see, when I was imagining all this, my plans, naturally, never included this kind of success -- I assumed I'd have been killed by now --

GLASS EYE (OVER)
-- Captain -- quickly --

CUT TO

GLASS EYE in the hold entrance.

GLASS EYE
A Portuguese ship, Captain -- it looks like the fattest of them all --

BONNET
There's no more room.
(dazed, shakes his head)
Perhaps it will be carrying only small things.
(as they leave the hold --)

CUT TO

THE PORTUGUESE SHIP sailing quickly forward, flag flying.

CUT TO

MR. WALPOLE running up a Portuguese flag upside down.

CUT TO

BONNET on the quarterdeck, looking up at the flag, then taking in his entire deck and as he looks --

CUT TO

BONNET'S PIRATES. They seem more confident; they're on a winning streak and they know it.

CUT TO

THE PORTUGUESE SHIP, very close now and quickly

CUT TO

THE UPSIDE DOWN FLAG BEING REPLACED BY THE JOLLY ROGER. Now --

CUT TO

THE PORTUGUESE SHIP AS SUDDENLY IT FLIES THE JOLLY ROGER TOO AND THE SECOND WE SEE IT --

ZOOM TO

GLASS EYE IN A STATE OF SHOCK.

GLASS EYE
Jesus Christ, we just attacked Blackbeard --
(and on that --)

CUT TO

BONNET, as the realization of what he's done sinks in. He doesn't know whether to pee or wind his watch.

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD ON HIS QUARTERDECK. He looks pretty formidable, but he's different from when we first saw him. No matches burning in his hair, nothing like that. He's just this powerhouse you don't want mad at you.

BLACKBEARD
Israel, my glass.

CUT TO

ISRAEL HANDS was this man's name. Tiny and gnarled, he was BLACKBEARD's right arm and closest companion. He has a terrible limp which we will find out about eventually. Now he moves forward, gives BLACKBEARD a telescope.

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD, taking it, bringing it to his eye.

CUT TO

BONNET AND WALPOLE. Whispered.

BONNET
He's looking at me, Mr. Walpole, what do I do?

MR. WALPOLE
I think a prayer might be in order.

CUT TO

BONNET as seen through BLACKBEARD'S TELESCOPE. BONNET is smiling as best he can.

BLACKBEARD
(to ISRAEL)
Who -- is -- that -- turd?

ISRAEL
I don't know, but I like his ship.

BLACKBEARD
(still using the telescope)
I like his clothes -- I wonder if that's how pirate captains are dressing these days?
(puts the telescope down)
Lower a boat, I am intrigued.
(takes a long swig of rum)
You know something? -- I've never been attacked by pirates before --
(beat)
-- I hated it --
(now from them --)

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD AND ISRAEL being rowed across to BONNET's ship. BLACKBEARD stands, holding a gigantic rum jug from which he drinks continually --

-- it should be noted that BLACKBEARD is always holding a gigantic rum jug from which he drinks continually --

CUT TO

BONNET AND MR. WALPOLE waiting nervously as BLACKBEARD AND ISRAEL clamber aboard.

BONNET
(moving to BLACKBEARD -- giving it his all)
Of course you know who I am -- who are you?
(and on that --)

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD, surprised -- then he breaks out laughing.

BONNET
(to a very relieved MR. WALPOLE)
Blackbeard is known far and wide for his sense of humor.
(now, holding out his hand)
Stede Bonnet, sir -- and I consider this an honor.

BLACKBEARD
(as they shake)
This is Israel, my right arm.

BONNET
This is Mr. Walpole; mine.

BLACKBEARD
(he has been studying BONNET)
I don't mean to pry, Bonnet, but what exactly is it that you do?

BONNET
Why, the same as you, but with less skill.

BLACKBEARD
Nonsense, you are clearly brilliant.

BONNET
(a bit stunned)
I am?

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD. He gestures, taking in the entire ship.

BLACKBEARD
This ship is proof -- I myself have never seen a <u>new</u> pirate vessel before -- you must have attacked a shipyard -- incredible thinking.

BONNET
(hesitant)
In point of fact...I bought it.

BLACKBEARD
With stolen money, of course.

BONNET
(shame)
My own.

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD AND ISRAEL. Flabbergasted.

BLACKBEARD
But no pirate has ever stooped to buying a ship --
(beat)
-- Bonnet your name was?
(BONNET nods)
I have been many times to the island of Barbados -- a sugar planter named Bonnet practically owns the place.

BONNET
I am a planter no longer, but a pirate captain, as you can see.

BLACKBEARD
(fascinated)
Have you had any captures?

BONNET
(apologetically)
Not today -- it's been a total waste --

BLACKBEARD
(cutting in)
-- have you ever had any captures?

BONNET
Five this fortnight.

BLACKBEARD
Five?
(looks at BONNET)
Take me to your hold.
(and on that --)

CUT TO

THE HOLD OF BONNET'S SHIP, stuffed as before.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

BONNET, with MR. WALPOLE, BLACKBEARD with ISRAEL, looking at all the booty. BLACKBEARD is clearly impressed.

BLACKBEARD
(to ISRAEL, pointing to a container)
A barrel of perfume, Israel -- think what that will bring.

BONNET
(moving right in)
Listen, you could help me. I need a fence.

BLACKBEARD
A what?

BONNET
A fence, a fence, someone who disposes of stolen goods.

BLACKBEARD
(news to him)
Is that what they're calling them now? Interesting.

(MORE)

BLACKBEARD (contd)
(beat)
I have such a fellow, yes; I'm on my way to see him, in America. It's only a day's sail.

BONNET
His name would be a great help to me.

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD. Huge --

BLACKBEARD
Money would be a great help to me!

CUT TO

BONNET, taken aback, tries to hold his ground, as BLACKBEARD advances on him.

BLACKBEARD
Ten per cent of your take will be my take. If my man sells your merchandise, that is your cost.

BONNET
Ten per cent is fine -- if he is reliable.

BLACKBEARD
Charles Eden reliable? Christ, he ought to be -- he's the governor of North Carolina...
(and on that piece of news, he and ISRAEL exit)

CUT TO

BONNET AND WALPOLE. BONNET makes sure they're alone. Then --

BONNET
(joyous)
Ten percent of this --
(he gestures around the hold)
-- to spend a day with him?
(beat)
The deal of my lifetime.
(now, from them --)

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD AND ISRAEL

They are moving away from the hold area. A half open door is up ahead.

ISRAEL
That's the easiest money you ever made.

BLACKBEARD
Tell me about it.
(shakes his head)
God, I wish I were rich --

ISRAEL
(snapping at him)
-- you are rich --
(beat)
-- your buried treasure --

BLACKBEARD
(snapping right back)
-- that's for my old age and you know it!
(now he points to the door)
I'll bet that's his cabin -- maybe I can steal something --
(as they push the door --)

CUT TO

BONNET'S CABIN as they peer inside, transfixed.

BLACKBEARD
It's enormous -- but there's something strange about it.
(they go in)

ISRAEL
(nods)
It's clean.

BLACKBEARD
That must be it.
(goes to BONNET's silk shirts, rubs them against his skin)
I am in love.

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD. He takes down some shirts, frames them against his body for size. BONNET is, of course, far more slender. During this --

ISRAEL (OVER)
Captain --
(BLACKBEARD ignores him --)
-- Sir --
(still pays no attention)
-- Blackbeard!
(now as he turns --)

CUT TO

ISRAEL, an odd look on his face, pointing at something.

CUT TO

THE GLAMOROUS PAINTING OF BLACKBEARD, hung on a wall.

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD as he sees it --

-- and doesn't quite know what the hell it is. He glances at ISRAEL --

-- who isn't quite sure either.

BLACKBEARD approaches the painting, stares at it.

CUT TO

THE PAINTING, staring back.

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD AND THE PAINTING, considering each other. BLACKBEARD attempts to strike the pose of the portrait -- he doesn't do it very well.

BLACKBEARD
Israel, that could be me.

ISRAEL
I think it <u>is</u> you.

BLACKBEARD
(studying the painting)
I'm...handsome...

ISRAEL
(having none of it)
That's not what you really look like.

BLACKBEARD
Not even a little?
(ISRAEL shakes his head)
Damn.
(starts out of the room now)
This Bonnet
...I think he admires me.

ISRAEL
He doesn't know you.

BLACKBEARD
True.
(beat)
I hope I don't have to kill him...
(and they are out the door and gone)

CUT TO

Would you believe, America -- we're on a long shot, a deserted stretch of shoreline, the two pirate ships anchored close in; a single rowboat has been pulled onto the beach; we're looking at a North Carolina dawn.

A word here about North Carolina at this time. (Some of this will be repeated in the screenplay, some not. The main thing I want to set out here is the "feel" of the place around 1718.)

Living in the best houses would have been like living in a wilderness vacation camp today. Clothes mostly itched; socks sagged because there wasn't sufficient elastic to keep them up; shoes were made from only one form -- there wasn't any right or left shoe, you just forced your feet into this one basic clump. Forget sanitation, you don't want to hear about it.

Running water had to be carried by bucket or shoulder yoke; what lamps there were smelled. People smelled too, so there was lots of powder used. Bugs were everywhere -- screens had been invented for windows but no one had thought to import them yet.

And everybody boozed. They believed that water was dangerous -- not just to bathe in (no one ever totally immersed themselves) but also weakening to the body. So children drank beer and hard cider and grownups drank rum and wine and brandy and the Dutch drank gin.

Life was hard and alcohol helped people get through it.

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD AND BONNET, following a narrow path through a moist marshy area. Lots of trees and vines and BLACKBEARD is using his sword to help clear the way. It's hot. BLACKBEARD is in good spirits as he leads the way.

BONNET
How far to Eden's house?

BLACKBEARD
Less than half an hour.

BONNET
(warding off a host of enormous mosquitoes)
I'd heard America was lovely.

BLACKBEARD
It is, but of course, it's not all as nice as this.
(glancing back to BONNET)

Keep an eye out for snakes.

CUT TO

BONNET, a little perturbed.

BONNET
Why? Are any of them poisonous?

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD, as his great sword suddenly flashes down.

BLACKBEARD
That one was.
(and on those words --)

CUT TO

A DEAD WATER MOCCASIN, bisected in the path.

CUT TO

BONNET, carefully and verrrry slowly edging around the snake. Then, as he hurries to catch up with BLACKBEARD --

CUT TO

A NARROW RUTTED ROAD; BLACKBEARD and BONNET are riding donkeys now.

BONNET
How did you first come to approach Eden?

BLACKBEARD
He approached me -- since his annual salary is only thirty pounds a year, and it costs him more than that to do his job, everyone expects him to steal.

BONNET
Naturally.

BLACKBEARD
North Carolina is the poorest and most desperate of the Colonies, so local merchants don't ask where items come from. And we tend to be cheaper than our more legitimate competitors, since everything we sell is stolen. British law says that only British ships can carry American goods...the Colonies need us, Bonnet.

BONNET
You make it seem as if you're doing a service.

BLACKBEARD
(he means this)
Make no mistake about it -- pirates are building America.
(he stops suddenly, points --)
The governor's mansion.
(now on those words --)

CUT TO

A REALLY CRUMMY HOUSE. Dark, plain, small. Not at all the "Monticello"-like image we have of how our forefathers lived. Now from outside --

CUT TO

THE KITCHEN OF THE GOVERNOR'S MANSION, and it's hotter than a pistol inside, not just because it's hotter than a pistol outside, but because there is this huge fire going in the enormous kitchen fireplace.

MRS. EDEN tends the fire, handling a huge array of spits, kettles and pots. She smokes a pipe. One side of her face is terribly swollen. MRS. EDEN is forty and looks closer to seventy.

GOVERNOR CHARLES EDEN -- a great Falstaffian figure -- sits at the head of the table devouring breakfast. A dozen children sit flanking their father. They all talk with a Southern accent, all eat with their fingers out of a large communal bowl.

Bugs are dive-bombing the table, and when the family isn't busy scratching their itchy shirts, they are slapping at whatever flies into their area.

TEN-YEAR-OLD BOY
(looking out the kitchen door)
It's Blackbeard, Daddy.

EDEN
(waving for BLACKBEARD and BONNET to enter)
Business calls, children -- finish your beer like good boys and girls.
(as the kids guzzle down their beer --)

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD and BONNET entering. BLACKBEARD makes this introduction as the children and MRS. EDEN leave.

BLACKBEARD
Governor Charles Eden, Major Stede Bonnet, a fellow sea artist.
(as they shake --)

GOVERNOR EDEN
(like a spellbinding minister)
I can guess why you're here -- you want me to auction off your merchandise in my barn. You want me to gather any men of means within a day's ride and have them here by sunset.
(looks at BLACKBEARD)
Well, it's just not possible --
(beat)
-- unless you swear to me that nothing you have for sale is stolen.

BLACKBEARD
(horrified)
Stolen?

GOVERNOR EDEN
(moving to BLACKBEARD)
Swear you found every item.

BLACKBEARD
(hand raised)
I've been finding unattended ships all over the Caribbean.

BONNET
(hand raised too)
The empty ship phenomenon is much talked about these days.

GOVERNOR EDEN
I suppose it's all legal, then.

BLACKBEARD
What the hell do you mean, "suppose"? We've done this dozens of times.

GOVERNOR EDEN
(he dreads saying this)
There...there may be a new law...
(now he blurts it out)
Virginia has asked it be made illegal to do business with pirates.

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD. Exploding.

BLACKBEARD
Illegal to do business with pirates?
(now he makes a strangling gesture with his hands)
I will destroy Adam Winthrop someday.

BONNET
(surprised)
You know Winthrop?

BLACKBEARD
I created him -- when Virginia was poor, I practically supported the Colony. I helped Winthrop get his job -- but now that they're fat from tobacco, he's betrayed me. Trying to starve me out, destroy me.

BONNET
I married his oh-so-devoted daughter -- he has been mocking me for years. But I will have revenge.

BLACKBEARD
(suddenly starting to strangle BONNET)
You will have nothing -- I will have revenge.
(realizing what he's doing, letting BONNET go)
Sorry, Bonnet, nothing personal.
(almost embarrassed)
I just go mad every so often...
(BONNET says nothing, just rubs his throat as we --)

CUT TO

A BUNCH OF HOGS EATING GARBAGE. Beyond, BLACKBEARD AND BONNET return their donkeys to a farmer, pay a few coins.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

A NARROW ROAD in a very small town. Just a few small buildings and houses. (The hogs are roaming free by the way -- at this time, people just dumped their slop into the streets and hogs served as garbage men.)

BLACKBEARD moves toward a larger building than the rest.

BLACKBEARD
(gesturing)
The grandest city in the area -- everything here a man could want.
(approaching the larger building)
The Buzzard Inn -- where I do my celebrating.
(now as they enter)

CUT TO

Inside. There are several rooms downstairs, the tap room being quite large. Lots of game and lots of fowl hang from the ceiling, to ripen, which was common then, but still gives the place a kind of different look. The Inn is, at the moment, empty.

BLACKBEARD
(calling out)
Mr. Buzzard --

CUT TO

A WOMAN OF MAYBE 35. If Sophia Loren needed a stand-in, this one could fill the job. A really luscious, voluptuous female. She is the WIDOW TYLER.

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD AND BONNET.

BLACKBEARD
Where's Buzzard?

WIDOW TYLER
Dead of malaria, the place is mine now, I was his sister.

BLACKBEARD
Called?

WIDOW TYLER
By you, the Widow Tyler.

BLACKBEARD
I need a sheet for this evening's orgy. Do you have any?

WIDOW TYLER
This is an inn, of course we have a sheet.

BLACKBEARD
A clean one?

WIDOW TYLER
(beat)
I'll have to check.
(as she turns to exit --)

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD AND BONNET watching her go.

BLACKBEARD
And some rum while we're waiting.
(she is gone; he shakes his head)
What an ugly old sow that was.

BONNET
I rather fancied her.

BLACKBEARD
Old, old, ohhhhhhhhhhhhh...
(as his voice trails off --)

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD. Staring at something. There is an almost beatific look on his face now as we

CUT TO

A VISION, carrying rum and two glasses. Maybe sixteen, she is small-waisted, big-eyed, and sort of perfect in every way.

THE VISION
Rum someone wanted?
(BLACKBEARD is dumbstruck)

BONNET
Here, thank you.

CUT TO

THE VISION, moving gracefully to them, putting down their order, and the instant she does, BLACKBEARD goes to one knee in an almost courtly way. He reaches out, takes her right hand in his huge paw, gently kisses her fingertips.

BLACKBEARD
Marry me --

THE VISION
-- but sir --
(and she tries to pull her hand away --)

BLACKBEARD
(holding on)
-- I am sincere --
(he is, by the way --)
Promise you'll marry me --

THE VISION
No.

BLACKBEARD
All right -- promise you won't marry anyone else 'til I return --

THE VISION
When are you returning?

BLACKBEARD
Tonight.

CUT TO

THE VISION. CLOSE UP. Laughing, almost starting to smile.

THE VISION
You have my word.
(HOLD on her face a moment, then --)

CUT TO

GOVERNOR EDEN'S BARN. EARLY EVENING. The place is lit by small torches and the sale is in progress. BLACKBEARD has his stuff in one area while BONNET has his merchandise across the barn. GOVERNOR EDEN is acting as auctioneer. TWO OR THREE DOZEN MEN, dressed as farmers mostly, are doing the buying. They follow EDEN as he points to some bales of silk.

GOVERNOR EDEN
All right, we can finish Blackbeard's part of the auction by disposing of these ten bales of silk, found recently floating at sea.

FIRST BUYER
I'll take all ten at one pound a bale. Ten pounds.

GOVERNOR EDEN
This is finest quality silk, ten pounds is an insult --

SECOND BUYER
-- make it twenty.

GOVERNOR EDEN
-- why not make it twenty-five?

THIRD BUYER
(authoritative)
-- twenty-five pounds for the lot.

BLACKBEARD is pleased as he looks around. The OTHER BUYERS are silent.

GOVERNOR EDEN
Sold, then.
(he starts across the barn to BONNET's side)

CUT TO

BONNET in front of his silk bales as GOVERNOR EDEN leads the BUYERS over.

GOVERNOR EDEN
(indicating the silk)
Ten bales. Also found at sea?
(BONNET nods)
Well, as long as there's nothing illegal, we'll begin. This seems of the same quality as the other --

THIRD BUYER
-- and I again bid twenty-five pounds.
(grumbling from the OTHER BUYERS but no one tops the bid)

BONNET
You have a passion for silk, sir.

THIRD BUYER
I make fine clothing in my shop --

BONNET
-- and you understand quality. As do I. The price is fifty pounds per bale or it is nothing.

CUT TO

THE GROUP. Stunned silence.

THIRD BUYER
Then it is nothing.

BONNET
(to MR. WALPOLE)
Get some men to take it back to the ship.
(to GOVERNOR EDEN)
As everyone knows, there is a silk shortage in Maryland -- ten pounds was the most recent price. I was willing to take half because of convenience, but since that's no longer possible --

THIRD BUYER
All right; fifty pounds.
(from that --)

ZOOM TO

BLACKBEARD, furious --

BLACKBEARD
(advancing)
You pay him more than me?
(now, as he starts to draw his sword --)

CUT TO

BONNET, talking very calmly to the THIRD BUYER.

BONNET
Perhaps you might possibly reconsider your bid to Blackbeard --

THIRD BUYER
(panicked)
-- please God I reconsider --
(to BLACKBEARD)
-- Allow me the honor of giving you additional money --
(as BLACKBEARD nods)

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD AND BONNET. Quietly.

BLACKBEARD
Lucky for us you knew about the silk shortage.

BONNET
There is no silk shortage. I made it up, but with conviction.

BLACKBEARD, for the first time now, looks at BONNET with genuine admiration.

BLACKBEARD
I'm beginning to understand the rich -- you're better liars than the rest of us.

BONNET
(nods)
That's half the battle --
(now, from the barn --)

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD DANCING. We're back at the Buzzard Inn later that evening. He holds THE VISION in his arms as he whirls her around the tap room. He is, surprisingly enough, graceful with her. Now --

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

THE BUZZARD. Empty when we saw it before, it is full of drinking and drunken pirates now, a few already motionless on the floor. Musicians are playing, there is a lot of noise; a number of gambling games are going on.

THE WIDOW TYLER is feverishly fending off any advances that come her way while at the same time dispensing brandy, rum and beer as quickly as she can. For cash. (One of the reasons

Colonists liked pirates was because they spent whatever they had as quickly as they could.)

BONNET sits with MR. WALPOLE, taking it all in. Every so often, he glances toward the WIDOW TYLER, then quickly away. He is the least sober we have ever seen him.

CUT TO

THE VISION, as BLACKBEARD, love in his eyes, sweeps her around the floor of the tavern.

THE VISION
I don't doubt your sincerity, but I am frightened, sir; I am, at sixteen, still pure.

BLACKBEARD
Then you have no choice but to marry me -- the best way to learn sex is from a legend --
(whispering)
...I work miracles on a mattress, child, that is common knowledge...

THE VISION looks at him a moment. No question about it, she's intrigued.

CUT TO

THE WIDOW TYLER, as THE VISION runs over to her by the bar.

THE VISION
Mommy, can I marry Blackbeard?

WIDOW TYLER
(she is beautiful, but she's also been around -- without breaking her rum-pouring motion --)
What's the deal?

THE VISION
He'll give me all the money he made tonight and he loves me.

WIDOW TYLER
Will he throw in his buried treasure?

THE VISION
I'll go ask him.

WIDOW TYLER
(calling after her)
If he will, I'd grab it.

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD AND THE VISION. He is seated in a corner table now, cradling an enormous rum jug.

BLACKBEARD
What do you think I've been burying it for, except to someday give it to my eternal love. Of course it's yours -- I'll sail in the morning to retrieve it.

THE VISION
(one final hesitation)
Okay, let's get married --
(she stops, upset)
-- Oh no. I can't get married tonight -- I want a proper wedding -- a real minister, and at this hour, there's nobody.
(she looks almost forlorn)

BLACKBEARD
(joyous)
Child, how can that be a problem when the most famous and successful Holy Man in all the Caribbean sits in this very room?
(and as he points --)

CUT TO

BONNET, eyes half closed, humming along with the music.

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD AND THE VISION. She's a bit suspicious.

THE VISION
He's a minister?

BLACKBEARD
Well, obviously he's not a pirate, dressed like that.

THE VISION
If he's a minister, how come he's with you?

BLACKBEARD
(without missing a beat)
Why, to redeem me, child. He has already converted the entire island of Barbados. I am his greatest challenge.

THE VISION
If he'll marry us, I'll do it.
(as she rushes back to her mother --)

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD AND BONNET

They are whispering to one another.

BONNET
-- I can't --

BLACKBEARD
-- of course you can --

BONNET
-- well, obviously, I can, what I mean is I won't --

BLACKBEARD
-- I have already said you would --

BONNET
-- what you have said matters nothing -- if I do it, it won't be a real wedding --

BLACKBEARD
-- who said anything about a real wedding?
-- I've already got six other wives --
(and now he stops, smiles, blows a little kiss across the room)

CUT TO

THE VISION. She stands there holding her mother's hand, nervous, hopeful.

CUT TO

BONNET. He sighs. He speaks quietly -- and he means it.

BONNET
I would truly love to help you -- but it would be wrong. Ethically, morally, every other way. The answer now and forever and finally is this: no. And nothing on earth can make me change my mind.
(he turns, starts away)

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD, watching him go, says three words.

BLACKBEARD
Sail with me.

CUT TO

BONNET. He freezes.

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD, moving up behind him.

BLACKBEARD
(his voice soft)
We don't have to part tonight -- you've made your men enough money for a month of carousing here.
(beat)
Bring Walpole. Be my guest.
(almost a whisper now)
Think of it -- we'll have adventures -- I'll teach you how to pirate, you'll teach me how to rich.
(and on that --)

CUT TO

BONNET --

-- whirling around.

BONNET
(big)
I am overcome with sudden religious frenzy!

BLACKBEARD
The wedding is on?

BONNET
(with dignity)
You may call me pastor or reverend, as you choose.

CUT TO

A ROOM OFF THE BAR, the raucous noise vaguely audible throughout. In the room are BLACKBEARD and THE VISION kneeling in front of BONNET. BLACKBEARD is a bit tidier than we're used to seeing him. THE VISION has never looked as extraordinary. MR. WALPOLE watches it all, terribly moved.

THE VISION
It really <u>is</u> exciting --

BLACKBEARD
-- Pastor Bonnet, love is being kept waiting --

BONNET
(to THE VISION)
Oughtn't your mother be here?

THE VISION
She said she'd try to slip away if business slowed --
(the noise is very much still with us)
-- We live a year off a night like this.

CUT TO

BONNET nods. He is very ministerial throughout.

BONNET
Give her the ring.

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD as he takes an expensive-looking ring off one of his giant fingers, takes THE VISION's hand, slips it on finger. It would fit more happily on her thumb.

BLACKBEARD
(tenderly)
For safekeeping.
(he puts it in her palm, closes her hand around it)

BONNET
Your name, child.

THE VISION
(tiny voice now)
Letitia Tyler, your eminence.

BONNET
Now yours, sir.

BLACKBEARD
Blackbeard.

BONNET
Surely you were not christened Blackbeard. What did your mother call you?

BLACKBEARD
Mostly "you little bastard."

BONNET
(with force and dignity)
Your true name, and be quick.

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD, eyes closed, trying hard to remember. He opens his eyes, looks plaintively at BONNET.

BLACKBEARD
It's been so long since anyone's used it.
(pounding a fist on the floor)
It was either Teach or Thatch. And the first was Ed or Ned.
(shakes his head sadly)
Too many years, Pastor; too much rum.

CUT TO

BONNET, gazing down at the couple, nods.

BONNET
(quickly)
Edward Teach and Letitia Tyler, consider yourselves married.

THE VISION
That's it?

BONNET
We are noted, in Barbados, for our lightning-like ceremonies.

THE VISION
It hardly feels like I'm married at all.

BONNET
(with a look at BLACKBEARD)
Wait.

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD, as he engulfs THE VISION in a passionate embrace --

CUT TO

BONNET, stepping around them. MR. WALPOLE, in tears, follows BONNET out.

MR. WALPOLE
Truly moving, sir.

BONNET
You'd cry at any wedding.

MR. WALPOLE
(dabbing at his eyes)
Begging your pardon, Major, I didn't at yours.
(before he closes the door, BONNET looks back and --)

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD, still kissing THE VISION; she has all but disappeared in his giant arms...Now --

CUT TO

THE TAP ROOM OF THE BUZZARD. THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT. DOZENS OF PIRATES lie sprawled asleep on the floor.

BONNET, awake, sits idly by himself, glancing every so often toward the ceiling. From above drift down sounds of THE VISION in what is either panic or ecstasy, plus intermittent growls from BLACKBEARD.

THE WIDOW TYLER, taking off her apron, comes from the next room, her work for the night finally done. She looks at BONNET.

WIDOW TYLER
Anything more?

BONNET
(hesitates, shakes his head; another cry from above)
I hope she survives.

WIDOW TYLER
I was married at fourteen to a man who weighed three hundred pounds. If I can survive that, she can survive this.
(beat)
You seem sad.

BONNET
(quietly)
Actually, I've never been happier.

CUT TO

THE WIDOW TYLER. Studies him a moment.

WIDOW TYLER
It's a decent enough face, yours.

BONNET
Yours is a great deal more.

WIDOW TYLER
Come along then.
(one hand reaches out)

BONNET
(nervous now)
Where?

WIDOW TYLER
I've never bedded with a gentleman.

BONNET
My wife has informed me, over a period of years, that I don't excel with women.

WIDOW TYLER
(softly)
...let me be the judge...
(and as she leads him to the stairs --)

CUT TO

THE STAIRCASE OF THE BUZZARD INN

It is the next morning.

ISRAEL AND MR. WALPOLE come down the stairs, leading a bunch of incredibly hung over pirates. They move unsteadily past, ISRAEL limping as always, heading outside.

Brief pause.

Now here comes BONNET down the stairs. Or, more precisely, floating down.

Very brief pause.

And now, THE WIDOW TYLER comes flying down into his arms. A passionate embrace --

-- then they part and he walks outside as she stands staring after him. He turns. They wave --

CUT TO

IN FRONT OF THE BUZZARD INN. ISRAEL moves to BONNET as he appears.

ISRAEL
Glad you're with us.

BONNET
Many thanks.

ISRAEL
He likes you.
(beat)
So be careful.

BONNET
How could you say such a thing? -- I thought you were friends.

ISRAEL
We are friends.

CUT TO

ISRAEL. CLOSE UP.

ISRAEL
(indicating his bad leg)
You think I was born like this?
(as he limps off)

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD, gloriously happy and gloriously hung over, staggering out of the Inn. He carries a rum jug, drinks, goes to BONNET, offers him the jug. BONNET accepts, drinks deep.

THE VISION (OVER)
Beautiful one...

CUT TO

THE VISION, in a second story window. She is rumpled and a lot older looking than the night before. But not unhappy.

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD, staring up at her.

BLACKBEARD
Speak, beloved dream --
(softly, to BONNET)
-- quickly, what's her name? --

BONNET
(a little appalled)
-- Letitia, for chrissakes --

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD. CLOSE UP. Guilt wracked.

BLACKBEARD
Of course -- how could I forget so quickly?
(now, his litany)
Oh, what a dreadful creature I am...

CUT TO

THE VISION, as THE WIDOW TYLER moves alongside her daughter.

Now she whispers to her. THE VISION nods.

THE VISION
Sweetest? One request?

BLACKBEARD
Letitia, anything.

THE VISION
I want that buried treasure.

BLACKBEARD
I'm off to get it now, Letitia beloved, Letitia my own.

Final waves all around. BLACKBEARD AND BONNET set off for the harbor...

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD'S SHIP at anchor. A flurry of activity aboard. BONNET's Revenge is anchored nearby, sails down.

BLACKBEARD AND BONNET move toward the gangplank.

BLACKBEARD
You'd like to see my treasure, wouldn't you?

BONNET
(beat -- trying to not scream out yesss)
Mild curiosity.

BLACKBEARD
You understand no man has ever seen it...
(beat)
...and survived.

BONNET
(a bit of hesitation)
You'd actually kill me?

BLACKBEARD
(happily -- an arm around BONNET's shoulder now)
Of course -- I like you, Bonnet.

BONNET
I don't think I want to pursue that logic.

BLACKBEARD
Fear not. You will be the first survivor.

BONNET
Why do you trust me?

BLACKBEARD
(a terrible smile)
I might be lying...
(and on that --)

CUT TO

A LARGE ROWBOAT pulled up onto the shores of a very lush tropical island. Thick foliage.

TWO SETS OF FOOTPRINTS go from the boat into the thick area.

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD AND BONNET as they enter the thick lush area. BLACKBEARD stops, glances around. He is, as might be expected, edgy and excited. BONNET, who carries a shovel, is just trying to keep under control.

BLACKBEARD reaches into a pocket, takes out a folded piece of paper.

BLACKBEARD
The directions -- I am as often without these as I am my sword --

BONNET
(mouth dry)
The treasure map.

BLACKBEARD
Maps can be read by strangers --
(hands paper to BONNET)

BONNET
(unfolding, surprised --)
A poem?
(BLACKBEARD nods)
You've beautiful writing.

BLACKBEARD
I myself am illiterate -- I dictated this to an English noble before the fear took him.

BONNET
Death by fear? Is that common?

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD. He gives a strange nod.

BLACKBEARD
It's not unknown -- when I'm around.
(gestures for BONNET to read)

BONNET
(reading -- BLACKBEARD closes his eyes)
"Where the shadow of the tree
meets the shadow of the beast;
Begin you there
and walk due east."
(MORE)

BONNET (contd)
(looks at BLACKBEARD)
Does that make sense?

BLACKBEARD
Let's hope so.
(now from that --)

CUT TO

A ROCK. If you squint, it looks kind of like a lion. Now --

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD AND BONNET on the lush island as BONNET points excitedly --

BONNET
Look -- the beast --
(pointing again)
-- meets the tree shadow -- there --

CUT TO

THE TWO SHADOWS MEETING.

CUT TO

BONNET, running to the spot, lugging the shovel.

BONNET
Walk east -- how far?

BLACKBEARD
Read!

BONNET
(reading)
"When the sand can be seen
And the waves from the sea --
Proceed you then
to the fallen tree."
(and on that --)

CUT TO

A GIGANTIC FALLEN TREE. BONNET dashes to it, wild with excitement. BLACKBEARD pulls out another paper. BONNET looks at it.

BONNET
What's that?

BLACKBEARD
More clues.
(now he pulls out yet another)

BONNET
How many clues are there?

BLACKBEARD
I think twenty-five.

BONNET
Do you kill people after they've found it for you -- or do they die of exhaustion?

BLACKBEARD
(gesturing onwards)
Nothing worthwhile is ever easy.
(and on that)

CUT TO

Just an amazingly thick part of the island. Light slants in strangely.

BONNET AND BLACKBEARD come into view. BONNET, carrying the shovel, is really short of breath. BLACKBEARD's face is a mask.

BONNET
"...In the deepest bush --
'Neath the deepest hive --
-- there the treasure be...
...if you're still alive... "
(as he looks around)

CUT TO

A LARGE BEEHIVE. It is long since empty. It rests in the corner of a tree trunk and a large branch.

CUT TO

BONNET, moving directly under the hive, plunging the shovel into the soft earth and

CUT TO

THE GROUND AS BONNET tears at it with the shovel and as he plunges the shovel into the ground again and again --

CUT TO

BONNET. It's a bit later, he's made a hole, and as the shovel at last strikes something metallic, BLACKBEARD goes to his knees beside the hole.

BLACKBEARD
It's there.

CUT TO

BONNET, exhausted and sweating from his digging, watching.

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD, clearing the earth and sand away with his hands, revealing a large chest buried in the ground. He takes a breath, reaches down into the hole, grabs the chest by its handles and with one mighty heave, lifts it clear.

CUT TO

THE TWO MEN, on their knees.

BONNET
(almost in awe -- he's heard about it for so long)
...Blackbeard's treasure --
(and on that --)

CUT TO

THE TREASURE CHEST as BLACKBEARD starts to open it and

CUT TO

BONNET, heart pounding and

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD, staring inside and

CUT TO

INSIDE THE CHEST --

-- it's empty!

Or at least, empty of treasure. It contains a rum jug --

-- and an old dark suit of clothes. Torn and tattered.

CUT TO

BONNET -- the shock of his life -- he can't believe it.

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD -- and obviously he can. He just reaches in, takes out the rum jug, uncorks it, starts to drink, stops, hands it to BONNET instead.

BLACKBEARD
You first, you did the digging.

BONNET
But -- you've been robbed -- someone stole
(MORE)

BONNET (contd)
your treasure and left this --
(he holds up the clothes --
not large at all)
These must have belonged to a very small man.

BLACKBEARD
Drink, Bonnet.

BONNET
(upset)
Some terrible trick has been played, how can you remain calm? --
(holding the clothes)
Whose are these?

BLACKBEARD
(takes the clothes)
As if that mattered.
(drops them back into the chest)
Perhaps now you'll believe my need for money.
(soft)
I once led a mighty fleet -- eight pirate ships, four hundred of the stoutest followers...
(blows on his hand as a magician might)
Poof. Gone.

BONNET
There never was any buried treasure?

BLACKBEARD
No pirate buries treasure -- we spend our money much too quickly. Buried treasure is a myth, begun, I think, by Captain Kidd.

BONNET
But you continue the myth.

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD as he takes the rum jug, drinks deep.

BLACKBEARD
People expect it of me. As they will of you -- find an island, make up silly clues, start spreading rumors. It's how you pirate.

BLACKBEARD trails off. A depression seems to have overtaken him. When he speaks, it's clear he is growing fond of BONNET. And admires him.

BLACKBEARD (contd)
People will believe your rumors, Stede -- once, in Barbados I rode out to see your home. I'd heard about it so much.
(beat)
And ever since, a place like that has been my dream. To retire there, still alive. I know exactly how much I need. A hundred thousand pounds.
(now he points and we --)

CUT TO

THE EMPTY TREASURE CHEST.

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD, staring sadly at it.

BLACKBEARD
A hundred thousand pounds is my dream. And this is my reality.
(pause. Then, softly --)
Fug...
(HOLD for a moment, then --)

CUT TO

THE HOLD OF A DIFFERENT SHIP. Not that full.

BONNET AND BLACKBEARD survey it. BONNET is excited. BLACKBEARD is genuinely depressed. Whatever he felt at the treasure site is only growing worse.

BONNET
Our first joint venture.

BLACKBEARD
(glum)
Tally ho.

BONNET
(trying to be cheery)
Perhaps the next ship will carry gold.

BLACKBEARD
(shrugs)
No matter -- I'm going to die like my father, Bonnet, in a pauper's grave.
(and he just walks out)

CUT TO

AFTERNOON AND ANOTHER SHIP RUNNING UP THE WHITE FLAG.

CUT TO

THE MAIN DECK OF BLACKBEARD'S SHIP -- BONNET AND ISRAEL AND MR. WALPOLE are getting ready to board -- the ships are lashed together.

BLACKBEARD sits off by himself. BONNET starts toward him. ISRAEL stops him.

ISRAEL
Careful.
(BONNET looks at him)
He does terrible things when he gets like this --
(BONNET nods, moves more slowly to BLACKBEARD)

BONNET
Ready for boarding, Captain.

BLACKBEARD
Fuck off.

BONNET
Are you depressed? -- you're certainly hiding it well.

BLACKBEARD
Careful --

BONNET
-- of what? -- you don't frighten me now.

BLACKBEARD
I don't frighten anybody -- and that's the only thing I was ever really good at.
(drinks)
I should never have told you my dream. Don't you understand? Now you know the truth, now you know me for a fool.
(so sad)
Go. I will never smile again.
(as BONNET leaves --)

CUT TO

THE CARIBBEAN. Calm. It's a little later.

CUT TO

THE CAPTURED SHIP -- there is commotion --

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD sitting alone on deck. Now he hears his name called and as he turns --

CUT TO

BONNET, wildly excited, standing on the other ship.

BONNET
Better than gold!
(big)
We have captured Virginians!

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD. CLOSE UP. Bigger. And smiling --

BLACKBEARD
Blackbeard is alive again! --
(as he lurches to his feet --)

CUT TO

THE DECK OF THE OTHER SHIP --

ISRAEL and some prisoners --

-- these are ten young men, all of them well dressed --

all of them -- as they look at BLACKBEARD, panicked.

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD. Sword in hand, eyes blazing, anxious for blood. BONNET speaks to him softly.

BONNET
I know who these young men are -- the sons of the richest of the rich -- Lees and Byrds, all the rest --

BLACKBEARD
(hungrily going toward them)
Oh young gentlemen, I had no idea who I was about to exterminate --
(now a mock bow)

HAUGHTY LADY (OVER)
(upper class accent)
-- this charade is over.

BONNET
(whirls at the sound. Shocked)
You?

CUT TO

THE HAUGHTY LADY. Obviously terribly rich, terribly spoiled, you just know the hardest thing she ever did was lift a spoon. Bearing down on BLACKBEARD AND BONNET.

HAUGHTY LADY
(to BONNET)
Yes, you disgrace, it is I.

BLACKBEARD
(to BONNET)
Who is the Medusa?

BONNET
My ex-grandmother in law --

HAUGHTY LADY
(heaping with scorn)
I detested speaking to you when I was obliged to, Bonnet. I certainly don't plan on doing it now.
(and on that she turns her back on BONNET, stares at BLACKBEARD)
Release us. At once. That is an order.

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD, looking at her.

BLACKBEARD
This gorgon is truly Winthrop's mother?
(on that she slaps BLACKBEARD hard across the face)

BONNET
Apologize or we'll make you walk the plank.

BLACKBEARD
(blinks)
Walk the what?

BONNET
The plank, my God, the plank.

BLACKBEARD
(sighs)
Bonnet, that is another of your misconceptions -- if I wanted to dump this creature into the water, I would simply heave her over the side.
(beat)
Now how <u>shall</u> I dispose of you?
(WINTHROP'S MOTHER smiles)
What occasioned your smile?

WINTHROP'S MOTHER
The loveliest sight -- <u>you dead</u> -- my perfect son will see to that.

BLACKBEARD
Will he now? Where is that written?

CUT TO

WINTHROP'S MOTHER. Proudly --

HAUGHTY LADY
On every proclamation board in the Colony of Virginia --
(makes a headline gesture with her hands)
-- one hundred pounds for the head of Blackbeard --

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD. Stunned and upset and

BLACKBEARD
That's all that fool Winthrop thinks I'm worth?
(he turns to ISRAEL)
Lower a boat.
(pointing to THE LARGEST AND MOST HANDSOME VIRGINIAN)
You, sir, shall row us.
(to BONNET)
We have how many hostages?

BONNET
Ten --
(a glance at WINTHROP'S MOTHER, she is enormous)
-- not counting Gargantua.

BLACKBEARD
Well, if a common pirate is worth a hundred pounds when dead, one living aristocrat should bring five hundred.
(to ISRAEL)
I shall be back by sundown with five thousand pounds.

CUT TO

A ROWBOAT BEING LOWERED. BLACKBEARD AND BONNET stand by the rail, waiting, along with THE ROWER. ISRAEL too.

BLACKBEARD
(to ISRAEL)
If I am not here by dusk, please return our guests to their homes --
(beat)
-- dismembered. And in Bonnet's memory, since he will also be dead, find a plank somewhere and have the bitch walk it.

HAUGHTY LADY
You enjoy trying to frighten people -- you actually glory in being cruel --

BLACKBEARD
These are cruel times, madam -- torture is still legal in Scotland; in England, the finest physicians prescribe whipping as standard treatment for the insane.
(beat)
But when I hear that word -- "cruel" -- yours is the face I see.

CUT TO

THE HAUGHTY LADY. Hard as nails.

HAUGHTY LADY
We have never met 'til now.

BLACKBEARD
The upper-class looks the same the world over. In London once, they held a public hanging and all the wealthy came in their carriages to see. The condemned man dropped, the rope snapped taut --
(long pause)
-- but he did not die; the authorities always used a rope too short to break a neck, so the victim could strangle slowly -- and then, madam -- then from this crowd of thousands watching the kicking figure, a boy rushed out --

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD. CLOSE UP now.

BLACKBEARD
-- this boy jumped and grabbed the hanging man's legs, trying with his extra weight to put the condemned out of his misery -- families of the victims were allowed to aid in this way.
(building)
And the crowd roared approval.
(still more)
And the child tried to help the hanging man die.
(quietly)
And all the wealthy -- all the ladies with your face, madam -- they clapped politely and laughed behind their fans...
(HOLD ON BLACKBEARD FOR AWHILE...Then --)

CUT TO

THE VIRGINIA SHORE, perhaps a mile off.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

BLACKBEARD AND BONNET AS THE ROWER brings them comfortably nearer shore. BLACKBEARD drinks from his rum jug, hands it to BONNET who takes a swig, hands it back. During this --

BONNET
Where did you hear that hanging story?

BLACKBEARD
My father was the man at the end of the rope, Stede -- I was the child.
(beat)
Those clothes in my chest you were asking about? That was the suit he died in.

BONNET hadn't expected the reply and is suddenly touched. BLACKBEARD hands the rum jug to THE ROWER.

THE ROWER
I don't drink, sir.

BLACKBEARD
I suggest you learn quickly.
(THE ROWER takes a sip, hands it back --)

THE ROWER
You plan to kill me?

BLACKBEARD
Hopefully not.
(drops his voice now)
But if we ever do meet again...and there are flames around my face...
(his voice is now like it was when we first met him scaring the ship into surrender)
...know that on that day, you will die screaming.

THE ROWER, terrified, takes another drink and we

CUT TO

A WHARF ON THE VIRGINIA SHORE. (Rich families either had their own or shared them and the ships would anchor alongside to load up on tobacco.)

Right now, there is wild activity on the wooden structure. A DOZEN MEN with rifles, more coming, women staring as THE MEN point their rifles at the approaching rowboat and

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD, standing up in the boat suddenly, one arm raised in greeting --

-- the other arm holds his giant sword which is at THE ROWER'S THROAT.

BLACKBEARD
Ah, my beloved Virginians, how filled my heart is at this warm and tender home-coming --

And as he begins blowing kisses toward the MEN WITH RIFLES --

CUT TO

A LARGE ROOM IN A VIRGINIA MANSION

This is much more grand than anything seen in North Carolina. Clearly we are in a wealthy colony now.

BLACKBEARD, BONNET AND THE ROWER are at one end of the room -- BLACKBEARD still has his sword out; THE ROWER is still very much his hostage.

A YOUNG MAID, terrified, is putting down a tray of tea by BONNET.

AT THE FAR END OF THE ROOM ARE TWO DOZEN PEOPLE. Wealthy, well dressed. This is the aristocracy of the Colony and they watch the pirates with scorn.

And fear.

Now, clicking footsteps are heard coming nearer and into the scene explodes --

-- GOVERNOR ADAM WINTHROP.

GOVERNOR WINTHROP
(indicating THE ROWER)
You will release that man --

BONNET
(cowed)
-- but if we do...you'll kill us.

GOVERNOR WINTHROP
Oh, your death is assured --

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD, prodding THE ROWER with his sword.

BLACKBEARD
Tell the Governor.

THE ROWER
(panicky)
He's captured us all...The rest are prisoners on his ship -- he left orders to kill them if he's not back by dusk with money.

GOVERNOR WINTHROP
(amused)
Oh? How much money?

THE ROWER
Five thousand pounds.
(and on that --)

CUT TO

ALL THE VIRGINIANS AND THEY ARE HYSTERICAL at the demand.

GOVERNOR WINTHROP
(almost smiling)
You seriously think we're going to simply hand over five thousand pounds?
(before BLACKBEARD can answer --)

CUT TO

BONNET, gracefully sipping tea.

BONNET
(quiet)
That's apiece, you understand.
(and on that --)

CUT TO

THE VIRGINIANS AND NOW THEY'RE REALLY HYSTERICAL -- some women cry out, another faints and

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD, stunned, whirling on BONNET.

BLACKBEARD
Are you trying to ruin everything -- ?

BONNET
(very cheery)
-- I know these people, they'll scream but they'll pay --
(beat)
-- now shut up please and drink your tea.
(MORE)

BONNET (contd)
(and with really remarkable calm, he turns to the terrified ROWER)
Go and join your family -- you're a fine young man and we wish you well.

CUT TO

THE ROWER. For a moment he just stands there -- then, realizing BONNET means it, he bolts for the protection of the other end of the room and

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD AND BONNET totally alone now, totally unprotected -- and totally unconcerned.

CUT TO

WINTHROP AND THE OTHERS -- who still hold their rifles. WINTHROP reaches for a weapon and as he does --

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD AND BONNET, drinking their tea.

BONNET
(to WINTHROP -- as it turns out BONNET wasn't cowed after all --)
One trigger squeeze, you cesspool, and they all die.
(to BLACKBEARD)
One sugar or two, Ed?

BLACKBEARD
(daintily holding out his cup)
Two would be splendid, Stede old stick.

CUT TO

WINTHROP, rifle poised -- he kind of shifts aim from one to the other unsure of which one he'd like to kill first.

CUT TO

BONNET AND BLACKBEARD -- the tea is really delightful.

CUT TO

THE OTHER VIRGINIANS as the tensions build -- now a DISTINGUISHED LOOKING MAN moves in front of WINTHROP.

DISTINGUISHED MAN
Our children do not die over your family matters, Adam -- or your temper.

BONNET
Oh the man has a fearsome temper, a regular brute he is --

WINTHROP
-- you cannot make me truly angry -- only a real man can do that --

BONNET
(on top of his game)
Wanna bet? I can do it with one word: "mommy" --
(and now, huge)
Fifty thousand pounds to set mommy free!
(and on that --)

CUT TO

WINTHROP and he just snaps -- cries out with rage -- and there's no question he would shoot if he wasn't overpowered by SEVERAL OTHER VIRGINIANS.

DISTINGUISHED MAN
He'll pay -- we'll all pay -- but what do you want with all that money anyway? You're richer than any of us.

BONNET
I'm sure I'll find a use for it.

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD, just a bit confused.

BLACKBEARD
Bonnet, just how much money is "all that money"?

CUT TO

BONNET. CLOSE UP. A pause. He looks at BLACKBEARD. Then very clearly he silently mouths the words, "...one...hundred ...thousand...pounds..."

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD. AN EVEN BIGGER CLOSE UP. A longer pause. Now, almost afraid to believe, he silently mouths these words back, but making it a question: "...one...hundred...thousand... pounds?..."

CUT BACK TO

BONNET; THE BIGGEST CLOSE UP YET. He nods.

CUT BACK TO

BLACKBEARD. STILL BIGGER. Now he silently mouths these words: "...one...hundred...thousand...pounds...for me?"

CUT BACK TO

BONNET. A final nod. Then --

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD. His life's dream has just come true --

-- and he grabs BONNET, kisses him --

WINTHROP (OVER)
Back to your room --

SUSAN (OVER)
-- not when my love stands before me.
(and on that bit of news --)

CUT TO

SUSAN -- standing near her father, staring at BONNET: she looks gorgeous.

BONNET
(gesturing)
Your father is beside you, Susan -- why were you looking in my direction?

SUSAN
(moving toward BONNET now)
Because you are my beloved husband...
(softer as she gets near him)
...and because you own my heart.
(and now she throws herself into his arms, covers his cheeks with kisses)

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD, watching with some interest.

BONNET
(trying to fight free)
This clearly is my day for being irresistible --

BLACKBEARD
This is the beast you've mentioned on occasion? Clearly she is even more horrid than you let on.

BONNET
She has confused me with another, I assure you -- that, or she is possessed --

MRS. BONNET
-- yes, possessed, mad -- mad with joy and passion that we have found each other again and can be locked together for eternity --

BONNET
-- Susan, release me --

MRS. BONNET
-- touch my breasts --

BONNET
-- Madam, I have been deprived of them so long I wouldn't begin to know where you keep them nowadays --

MRS. BONNET
(placing his hands on her boobs)
They are here.

CUT TO

WINTHROP, watching BONNET fondle his daughter -- it's too much for him -- as BONNET finally manages to push her away and is clear --

-- WINTHROP raises his rifle and fires -- and the sound explodes and

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD, shoving BONNET out of the way, charging WINTHROP who has been overcome by other VIRGINIANS --

BLACKBEARD
(in a fury -- sword out at WINTHROP's throat)
Even I have never fired upon an unarmed man --

BONNET
-- it's all right -- only a real man can provoke me -- release him -- I'm sure he needs to get to the bathroom --

CUT TO

WINTHROP, humiliated, defeated, he has no choice but to flee. And as he does --

CUT TO

SUSAN, watching her father run off.

SUSAN
No one has ever done that before --
(whirling on BONNET, eyes bright)
-- I've been waiting all my life for a man to do that --
(moving to him again)
-- I am afire -- you are so famous now, my precious -- your legend grows daily -- and I know you're doing it all for one reason --
(big)
-- to have again the bliss we once knew --

BONNET
(flabbergasted)
You think I want you back?

SUSAN
Of course -- because you owe everything to me --

CUT TO

BONNET. It's very hard to deal with. He glances around the room -- everyone is listening. He takes her to two French doors, pushes them open and we

CUT TO

A LOVELY LITTLE GARDEN, just outside.

BONNET
Susan -- did you ever insult me? --
(she nods)
-- ignore me? --
(nods and smiles)
-- demean me? --

SUSAN
-- a speciality.

BONNET
Mortify me, embarrass me, emasculate me?

SUSAN
Yup.

BONNET
And did you think I enjoyed all of that?

SUSAN
Hated it.

BONNET
Then what in the world do I owe you?

CUT TO

SUSAN. Dead serious.

SUSAN
-- I made you what you are! -- if it weren't for me, you'd still be running a sugar plantation.

BONNET
(stupefied)
You're telling me you destroyed me for my own good?

SUSAN
Yes -- and now it is time to acknowledge it --
(her voice goes soft)
-- admit you want me.

CUT TO

BONNET, studying her.

BONNET
I did and I do -- you're that dangerous -- and I wanted to please you so terribly I endured your years of scorn --
(bigger)
-- but I no longer find scorn nourishing -- these are the good days of my life -- good and getting better -- you may go to hell, my darling --
(simply)
-- I walk with titans now...
(and as he turns, leaves)

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD AND BONNET back in the rowboat. BLACKBEARD'S SHIP is not far away. BLACKBEARD does the rowing. There is a tied up bag at his feet.

BLACKBEARD
I've decided not to tell the crew.

BONNET
(nods)
I'm not surprised, it doesn't matter, I'll make them money next time.

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD. Hard for him to say.

BLACKBEARD
You know the most wonderful gift? -- finding a new friend late in life...
(it's a sweet moment. HOLD on the two of them. Now --)

CUT TO

A LOVELY LITTLE SPIT OF LAND. Afternoon. The sun on the water makes it seem almost enchanted.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

BLACKBEARD'S SHIP. A tranquil time. The hostages are gone. Most of the crew is at rest, drinking happily. The musicians play a sweet, haunting tune. MR. WALPOLE sits on a deck rail, chatting with ISRAEL.

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD AND BONNET on the quarterdeck. BLACKBEARD, in a kind of reflective mood, gestures toward the sand spit.

BLACKBEARD
That little spot holds many memories for me -- beautiful, isn't it?
(BONNET nods, continues to stare out)
It's where I always maroon people -- you're dying there tonight.
(and on that --)

CUT TO

BONNET. CLOSE UP. Not quite sure he heard right -- a half smile still on his face, he looks at BLACKBEARD. The smile drains.

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD, a pistol in his big hands, pointing at BONNET's throat.

BLACKBEARD
By midnight it's underwater -- now don't look glum, you'll have Mr. Walpole for company --
(on the name --)

CUT TO

BONNET, whirling, screaming --

BONNET
Mr. Walpole -- save yourself --

CUT TO

WALPOLE, squinting into the sun, seated on the rail --

CUT TO

BONNET, at the top of his lungs --

BONNET
-- you know how to swim -- JUMP!!!

CUT TO

MR. WALPOLE. As several of the pirates grab for him, he pushes them off, rolls backward over the railing and

CUT TO

THE WATER as MR. WALPOLE falls through the sunlight, body twisting and turning and it's a long way but finally he hits with a tremendous splash and sinks, stunned, and

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD, the pistol on BONNET still. ISRAEL calls out --

ISRAEL
Should I lower a boat, Captain?
(BLACKBEARD glances toward the water and

CUT TO

MR. WALPOLE, slowly swimming away from the boat. He's not very graceful in the water. A wave hits him, he coughs, sinks down, struggles up again, tries to keep going --

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD, back to ISRAEL.

BLACKBEARD
It's three miles to shore, Israel; why deprive the sharks?

CUT TO

BONNET, watching as MR. WALPOLE sinks again, rises, then slowly goes down.

HOLD ON BONNET -- for a moment it looks like he's going to come apart, but he fights it, regains control --

-- then he whirls, creams BLACKBEARD hard in the face --

-- BLACKBEARD reels backwards, face bloody -- but he still has the pistol and it's still pointed --

BONNET
(big)
-- I won't beg, you son of a bitch bastard
-- let's get on with it!
(and on those words --)

CUT TO

THE SAND SPIT -- a little darker, a little later -- It's already starting to shrink as the waters rise --

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

BONNET, standing alone on the sand spit -- BLACKBEARD, armed, is getting ready to row back to his ship -- which is beginning to get ready to move -- sails are billowing --

BONNET
You think this is about your money, don't you? -- I'll tell the crew about the hundred thousand? --

BLACKBEARD
Of course -- I need every penny --

BONNET
-- and you crippled Israel because?

BLACKBEARD
It was an accident, my gun went off -- but he had done a terrible thing -- I can't remember quite what --

BONNET
-- you always do this, don't you? -- destroy anything you care for --

BLACKBEARD
(and now he's starting to get upset --)
-- nonsense -- I do it because the crew expects it of me -- if I don't commit an atrocity every so often, they'll lose faith --

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD, as he gets in the boat now, picks up the oars. He's more upset than BONNET.

BONNET
-- kill me --

BLACKBEARD
(looks at BONNET)
-- I think I am, Stede --

CUT TO

BONNET. CLOSE UP.

BONNET
-- in <u>combat</u> -- all I've ever wanted is to die gloriously -- I want a death that's remembered! --

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD, rowing away --

BLACKBEARD
-- you're the best fellow I've ever met -- don't make it any harder on me than it already is -- please -- <u>beg</u> --
(BONNET just stares at him in silence. BLACKBEARD sighs)
-- I've told you what a dreadful creature I am...perhaps now you'll begin to believe me.

CUT TO

BONNET. Staring.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

What he's staring at: BLACKBEARD'S SHIP sailing into the setting sun.

BONNET's all alone now.

KEEP PULLING BACK

THE SAND SPIT.

Much smaller than it was...HOLD BRIEFLY, then --

CUT TO

THE MOON. Full. Middle of the night.

CUT TO

THE WATERS. Rough. The wind howls. It's cold and it's scary and

CUT TO

A SHARK FIN knifing through the chill water, circling, circling, as we

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

BONNET, standing on what's left of the sand spit -- all of maybe one square yard. He's freezing cold.

CUT TO

THE SHARK FIN. Closer.

CUT TO

BONNET, watching it, transfixed.

CUT TO

A WAVE, rolling along the shallow water of the sand spit, slowly eating away at the last of BONNET's protection.

CUT TO

BONNET. The wind is worse now.

CUT TO

THE SHARK FIN, circling still closer and

CUT TO

BONNET, and he cannot stop watching it, cannot tear his eyes away.

CUT TO

A SECOND SHARK FIN moving alongside the first, and now the two beasts circle closer, always closer and

CUT TO

ANOTHER WAVE, and the water is reaching BONNET's feet now and

CUT TO

THE SHARK FINS -- terrifying --

CUT TO

MR. WALPOLE, rowing slowly into view.

CUT TO

BONNET as the older man, clearly exhausted, maneuvers the boat closer.

MR. WALPOLE
Sorry if I've kept you waiting, Major, but it's been rather a more athletic day than I'm used to.

THE SHARKS are knifing between the boat and where BONNET precariously stands.

BONNET
(glancing at the sharks)
Other than docking your salary, probably I won't punish you.

MR. WALPOLE
Bless you for your understanding nature.

BONNET springs as high as he can into the air, skims over the sharks, lands safely in the boat, takes the oars.

BONNET
Julius Caesar was also humiliated by pirates.
(starting to row)
He found his tormenters and killed them.

MR. WALPOLE
Very biblical.

BONNET
I am going to kill Blackbeard.

MR. WALPOLE
(a bit dubiously)
Will that be before or after breakfast, sir?

BONNET
Doubt me all you want, you will see.
First, to the ship. Then into battle.
(beat)
You really are perfection, Mr. Walpole.

MR. WALPOLE
(makes a face)
Please, Major -- don't get carried away.
(now as BONNET rows --)

CUT TO

A DESERTED BEACH. Middle of the night.

THE ROWBOAT has been pulled ashore.

CUT TO

BONNET AND WALPOLE. Both exhausted now, standing in shadow behind rocks on the beach, staring ahead.

CUT TO

WHAT THEY'RE STARING AT: THE REVENGE. Rocking gently,

outlined against the moonlit sky. It never looked more beautiful.

CUT TO

BONNET AND WALPOLE. They glance around -- nothing, no movement.

BONNET
(whispered)
It shouldn't be unguarded. Where's the crew?
(MR. WALPOLE shakes his head)

CUT TO

BONNET AND WALPOLE, slowly going closer, staying in shadow.

CUT TO

THE REVENGE. Closer. No one in sight.

CUT TO

BONNET AND WALPOLE glancing around. Silence. They start moving forward, out of the shadows now.

CUT TO

THE PLANK that connects the dock and the deck of the ship.

CUT TO

BONNET AND WALPOLE silently moving up the plank to THE REVENGE. BONNET, excitement building, is in the lead. MR. WALPOLE follows, and as he glances behind --

CUT TO

A DOZEN ARMED GUARDS, moving out of shadow, rifles aimed at them.

CUT TO

WALPOLE AND BONNET as, up ahead on the ship, WINTHROP appears.

WINTHROP
(very casually)
Been waiting for you...
(and on that)

CUT TO

THE DECK OF THE REVENGE AS MORE ARMED GUARDS move into view -- BONNET AND WALPOLE are trapped --

WINTHROP
(kind of pleasant)
Thought you'd like to watch.

BONNET
Where's my crew?

WINTHROP
Ah well, probably you can guess.
(and now as BONNET AND MR. WALPOLE begin to be tied up --)

CUT TO

BACK ON THE DOCK. BONNET AND WALPOLE, surrounded, hands bound by rope, stare as WINTHROP, alone on deck, is splashing the contents of a large bucket around.

WINTHROP
That should do it.

CUT TO

BONNET, watching as WINTHROP comes down the plank toward him. The ship is empty of men now.

WINTHROP
How proud you must be.
(he gestures toward the ship)
What a beauty.

CUT TO

THE REVENGE -- silhouetted beautifully in the moonlight.

CUT TO

WINTHROP. He lights a torch now, and as it starts to burn --

BONNET
(agonized)
Why?

WINTHROP
(cheery)
To cause you pain.
(with that he lobs the torch into the air)

CUT TO

THE TORCH, arcing through the quiet night.

It lands on deck.

And nothing. Nothing at all. Maybe the air burnt it out.

CUT TO

BONNET, just standing there, hoping.

CUT TO

THE REVENGE --

-- and as we watch, flames start.

CUT TO

BONNET AND WALPOLE. Horrified.

CUT TO

WINTHROP, watching them. Couldn't be lovelier.

CUT TO

THE FLAMES, leaping up into the night --

CUT TO

ALL THE MEN ON THE DOCK, moving back from the heat --

-- only BONNET moves forward. In terrible pain.

CUT TO

THE FLAMES. Silhouetting the ship.

CUT TO

BONNET. He closes his eyes.

CUT TO

THE REVENGE. Outlined by fire now, the flames licking everywhere --

-- and as we continue to watch, we hear a new sound, a sickening sound -- a whip cutting into flesh.

Another crack of the whip. Again the sound of flesh being invaded.

DISSOLVE TO

A GALLOWS BEING QUICKLY COMPLETED -- it's day now --

-- the whipping sound goes on.

CUT TO

BONNET in a jail cell, held by guards while WINTHROP administers the flogging. BONNET will not cry out.

In the next cell, MR. WALPOLE tries not to watch. MR. WALPOLE looks pale now. Old and pale. The exertion of what he's gone through is plainly visible. It's sad.

CUT TO

WINTHROP. He strikes again, with great power.

CUT TO

BONNET. Bleeding badly. Only half conscious. Still, he's managing to keep control. But for how much longer?

CUT TO

WINTHROP. Starts to strike again, changes his mind. Reluctantly, he stops, curls the whip.

WINTHROP
Like a wish come true this is --
(he gestures out the window where the gallows top is visible)
-- but I mustn't be greedy.

He nods to the GUARDS who hold BONNET. They release him.

BONNET falls hard to the floor.

CUT TO

WINTHROP AND THE GUARDS being let out by the JAILKEEPER. WINTHROP turns back for a moment.

WINTHROP
I get to hang you at dawn.
(as he starts off)

MR. WALPOLE (OVER)
Governor -- please --

CUT TO

WALPOLE in the next cell, hands on the bars. He's in terrible shape.

WINTHROP
What?

MR. WALPOLE
Please -- I've raised him all his life -- let us spend the last night together.

WINTHROP
Would you like that?

MR. WALPOLE
(he would; so much)
It would be my final wish.

CUT TO

WINTHROP. He considers this, bends close to WALPOLE.

WINTHROP
Then by all means...
(beat)
...no.

And with that MR. WALPOLE spits through the bars right into WINTHROP'S FACE.

CUT TO

WINTHROP -- and amazingly, he kind of likes that. He laughs, gestures to the JAILKEEPER.

WINTHROP
Who's to say I'm not humane?
(and now as he leaves)

CUT TO

MR. WALPOLE, being shoved into BONNET's cell by THE JAILKEEPER. BONNET barely moves. MR. WALPOLE simply lies down on the floor beside him, silently gathers him up in his arms...holds him...

CUT TO

THE CELL. LATER.

Moonlight floods the cell. THE TWO MEN have not moved.

CUT TO

THE MOON. Full. Lovely.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

BLACKBEARD alone on the deck of his ship which is moored in a cove, staring at the moon.

BLACKBEARD is in torment. He grabs his rum jug, drinks --

-- it tastes like shit to him now. He throws the jug away.

CUT TO

THE MOON. Full. Lovely.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

We're outside BONNET'S CELL. JAILKEEPER shifts are being changed. HOODED PRIESTS move silently by. A YOUNG GUARD gathers up empty food trays.

In the cell, BONNET AND WALPOLE lie as before. They could be dead.

CUT TO

THE BACK DOOR OF THE JAIL OPENING. THE YOUNG GUARD, arms loaded with the trays, whistles sharply to a WOMAN to come get them.

THE WOMAN does. She carries several buckets that contain fresh food, exchanges the fresh food for the empty trays, moves away.

CUT TO

THE WOMAN WITH THE TRAYS -- she hurries into a kitchen. It's large -- that's because it's the kitchen of THE BUZZARD INN and THE WOMAN is THE WIDOW TYLER.

She drops the trays to the floor, where they make a tremendous clatter, runs out of the kitchen and

CUT TO

A BUNCH OF MEN DRINKING AT THE BAR. One of them is ISRAEL. As THE WIDOW TYLER rushes to him --

CUT TO

THE CELL. BONNET AND MR. WALPOLE lie inert as before. It's getting very strange now. And not very nice.

CUT TO

THE MOON. Still full, still lovely -- but starting to go down.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD'S SHIP. BLACKBEARD is still alone on deck, still in deep despair. ISRAEL limps up the gangplank toward him --

ISRAEL

-- listen --

BLACKBEARD
(covering his ears)
-- I have sinned beyond forgiveness, Israel -- I have smiled my last smile --

ISRAEL
(shaking the bigger man)
-- you idiot, Bonnet's alive --

BLACKBEARD
(all smiles)
-- ecstasy! --

ISRAEL
-- but he dies in an hour --

BLACKBEARD
(now a sudden fury -- giant sword in hand)
-- who dares to kill Bonnet? --

ISRAEL
-- Winthrop --

BLACKBEARD
Winthrop?

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD, staring at the skies, waving his great sword --

BLACKBEARD
Thank you, God --

CUT TO

A FOREST. THE SOUND OF HORSES IN THE NIGHT -- BLACKBEARD AND ISRAEL come riding into view -- neither of them rides well, but they are going like crazy.

CUT TO

THE BARRED WINDOW OF THE CELL. Almost dawn. The gallows, finished, is outlined beyond.

CUT TO

BONNET. His eyes flutter...he wakes...the pain is still there. He fights through it, manages to rise to one elbow. He looks around.

CUT TO

MR. WALPOLE. Lying beside him. Pale. Still. Dead.

CUT TO

BONNET, CLOSE UP, and he just can't help it as suddenly tears flood from his eyes and a cry of sheer anguish rips through him. Blindly, he reaches out, pulls WALPOLE into his arms, holds him tight, rocks back and forth.

BONNET
(shattered, sobbing)
You weren't meant to go first, old man... I've never been alive without you, I can't start now...I can't...

CUT TO

THE JAILKEEPER. The noise has wakened him and he glances angrily into the cell where BONNET is keening over his loss. THE JAILKEEPER mutters, shifts positions, tries to go back to sleep.

CUT TO

BONNET. Blinded by his grief -- he closes his eyes but cannot stop his tears --

-- MR. WALPOLE'S EYES on the other hand are quite dry and quite open.

MR. WALPOLE
(mouthing this)
Get him in here --

BONNET
(wailing on)
-- I have no more interest in this world ...nothing matters now...not sunlight, not stars...not --
(as WALPOLE's words register)
-- hmmm?

MR. WALPOLE
(distinctly)
-- get -- the -- guard -- in -- here --

BONNET
(on the case)
-- excellent notion --
(and on that)

CUT TO

THE JAILKEEPER, opening his eyes again as --

BONNET
-- Jailkeeper -- help me --
(tears streaming down)
-- he's not dead --

JAILKEEPER
-- he's going to die anyway --

BONNET
-- think Winthrop will be happy if you keep him from killing someone? --

JAILKEEPER
(panicked, he jumps up)
-- Christ -- you're right! --
(and as he grabs the key --)

CUT TO

INSIDE THE CELL as THE YOUNG JAILKEEPER rushes inside, kneels beside BONNET over WALPOLE --

-- which is when WALPOLE's arms go tight around him, holding him --

BONNET
Well positioned.
(and as he clobbers THE JAILKEEPER)

CUT TO

THE CELL. THE JAILKEEPER lies under a blanket with something stuffed beside him that resembles another person.

CUT TO

BONNET AND WALPOLE, as BONNET locks the cell door, and he and WALPOLE start off --

-- then suddenly stop --

BONNET
(tense)
Shit.

CUT TO

TWO HOODED PRIESTS walking down the corridor toward them.

CUT TO

BONNET AND WALPOLE, nowhere to hide. Now --

CUT TO

TWO HOODED PRIESTS walking away now. They look at each other -- it's BONNET AND WALPOLE. As they move off --

CUT TO

THEIR CELL. The size of what's under the blanket has swelled.

CUT TO

BONNET AND WALPOLE, rounding a corner.

BONNET
(more tense)
Double shit --

CUT TO

TWO NEW HOODED PRIESTS coming in their direction.

CUT TO

BONNET AND WALPOLE. They pull their hoods more tightly around them, hunch over, scurry silently on --

-- they pass THE TWO NEW HOODED PRIESTS -- who are also hunched over, also scurrying silently along --

CUT TO

THE FOUR PRIESTS, moving past each other --

-- then they stop. Then --

PRIEST (OVER)
(joyously -- it's BLACKBEARD)
You!

OTHER PRIEST (OVER)
(furiously -- it's BONNET)
<u>You</u>! --

BLACKBEARD
(throwing off his hood)
-- get back to your cell, I'm going to save you --

BONNET
(throwing off his)
-- get back to your ship -- I'm going to kill you --

MR. WALPOLE
(enough is enough)
May we please just fucking table this discussion 'til later?

ISRAEL
Good thinking, Herman --
(as they start to go --)

CUT TO

FOUR ARMED GUARDS running round a corner in their direction --

MR. WALPOLE
-- all right -- let's run --

BLACKBEARD
-- run? Why? There are only four of them.
(and he draws his sword, charges)

CUT TO

THE FOUR ARMED GUARDS

-- and they don't know it but they have zero chance of survival --

-- sure they have swords and yes they have pistols --

-- <u>but this is BLACKBEARD</u> -- and with a shriek of joy he leaps into their midst, slashing this way and that with his giant sword --

-- blood is suddenly <u>everywhere</u> --

-- none of it his --

CUT TO

BONNET AND WALPOLE AND ISRAEL watching as BLACKBEARD finishes off the FOUR GUARDS -- BONNET AND WALPOLE are astonished by the display -- ISRAEL just shakes his head --

ISRAEL
-- he's slow today --

MR. WALPOLE
(on that bit of news, he turns to BONNET)
-- you might think about forgiving the man, Major --

BONNET
-- I'll certainly take it under consideration --
(now as BLACKBEARD joins them and they start to run)

CUT TO

WOODS -- again the sound of horses -- THE FOUR OF THEM, BONNET BEHIND BLACKBEARD, WALPOLE BEHIND ISRAEL -- riding wildly back the way they came.

From behind them now -- the sound of alarm bells being rung.

Which only makes them go faster as we

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD'S SHIP, ADVENTURE --

-- and great activity as it gets ready to sail.

BLACKBEARD is charging around, shouting orders, BONNET with him. MR. WALPOLE is with ISRAEL by the tiller.

PIRATES are crawling around the rigging, sails being prepared. A BUNCH OF OTHER PIRATES are near the anchor.

Everything is going quickly and well and then --

-- CANNON SHOTS EXPLODE IN THE DISTANCE and

CUT TO

A HUGE SHIP, sailing in their direction -- and

CUT TO

THE QUARTERDECK OF THE GIANT SHIP AND GOVERNOR WINTHROP standing there grim -- THE ROWER is with him as are all of the YOUNG VIRGINIANS who were taken hostage and --

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD AND BONNET --

BLACKBEARD
-- look at the size of that --
(whirling)
-- lift anchor!
(as CREW MEMBERS leap to obey)

BONNET
Fight him here?

BLACKBEARD looks around -- it might be noted we are close to the mouth of Cape Fear -- the area is dotted with small, heavily foliaged islands.

BLACKBEARD
(he doesn't)
No room to maneuver --
(looking around)
-- Israel --

ISRAEL
-- Sir --

BLACKBEARD
-- can you reach open sea?
(MORE)

BLACKBEARD (contd)
(ISRAEL checks it out, shakes his head)
Do your best.
(and on that --)

CUT TO

THE ANCHOR OF BLACKBEARD'S SHIP ADVENTURE being lifted and

CUT TO

THE SAILS FILLING WITH WIND and

CUT TO

ISRAEL AT THE TILLER, a master and --

-- and off we go!

CUT TO

WINTHROP'S GIANT SHIP, moving like a bitch, closing the distance but still maybe a mile away and

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD'S SHIP ADVENTURE, gathering speed and

CUT TO

THE GIANT SHIP AND WINTHROP shouting "More sail" and

CUT TO

THE GIANT SHIP, as more sails are released and

CUT TO

THE GIANT SHIP, even faster now and

CUT TO

WINTHROP, taut, grim, but he has to be pleased and

CUT TO

THE ADVENTURE -- ISRAEL glances back, points, shakes his head and as BLACKBEARD AND BONNET look around --

CUT TO

THE GIANT SHIP. Closer and

CUT TO

WINTHROP, watching the gap close, turning, crying "Now!" and

CUT TO

HALF A DOZEN VIRGINIA SAILORS, attaching a flying jib and as it billows out --

CUT TO

THE GIANT SHIP, more speed and

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD AND BONNET -- the gap is narrowing much too quickly --

BONNET
Have you a cohorn?
(BLACKBEARD nods)

BLACKBEARD
(to ISRAEL)
We'll try and slow him -- but Israel -- you must reach open sea --
(ISRAEL nods, turns back to the tiller as we --)

CUT TO

THE GIANT SHIP, and it goes faster still and

CUT TO

WINTHROP, growing wild with excitement -- BLACKBEARD is less than three-quarters of a mile away now. And the GIANT SHIP is gaining rapidly as we

CUT TO

SOMETHING WE HAVEN'T SEEN BEFORE. It's a large pile of pieces of scrap metal, sharp and jagged. And next to it is another pile of grape shot -- iron balls the size of walnuts. And a third pile -- this is of metal pieces connected by a small metal bar -- miniature bar bells they look like. And

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

HALF-A-DOZEN OF BLACKBEARD'S PIRATES, feverishly stuffing these items into metal cannisters -- cylinder-shaped -- and once the cannisters are closed, dropping them into an enormous bag of sailing cloth.

BONNET hurries up, grabs the cloth bag, manages to sling it over his shoulder, and looks around.

BLACKBEARD
Bring me the cohorn --
(and on that word --)

CUT TO

TWO LARGE PIRATES, struggling with a cohorn -- it was a wide-mouthed, very short cannon screwed into a wooden base and

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD, going to the two men, grabbing the cohorn all by himself, lifting it by one of its handles, and then he begins to climb the rigging of his ship. BONNET, with the shells, climbs with him.

CUT TO

THE ROWER, alongside WINTHROP, grabbing his telescopes, looking across and

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD, in the telescope, carrying his incredibly heavy burden as if it didn't exist, and scrambling higher and higher into the rigging and

CUT TO

THE ROWER putting his telescope down. An ordinary human cannot do what BLACKBEARD is doing. He looks worried as we

CUT TO

ISRAEL, at the tiller, glancing up and

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD AND BONNET going like mad bastards, higher and higher, fifty feet, sixty feet, seventy-five and

CUT TO

THE GIANT SHIP, no more than half a mile away and

CUT TO

ISRAEL, staring at the river mouth and the open sea beyond but who knows if he's going to make it and

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD AND BONNET, and at last they're there -- all the way to the fighting top. This was a platform with a railing placed at the junction of the main and topmasts -- over a hundred feet up in the air and

CUT TO

THE FIGHTING TOP as BONNET heaves the cloth bag of cannisters over the railing onto the platform. Then he and BLACKBEARD climb over, put the cohorn up, look out at their pursuer and

CUT TO

WINTHROP, not more than a quarter-mile away and

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD AND BONNET, feverish in the fighting top, ripping the bag open, setting up the cohorn and

CUT TO

WINTHROP, calling out to his men.

WINTHROP
Prepare to fire.

CUT TO

THE CANNON CREWS. WINTHROP has twenty cannons and he's three hundred yards away and closing --

CUT TO

ISRAEL at the Adventure's tiller, and it's obvious he's never going to make it to open sea and

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD AND BONNET IN THE FIGHTING TOP, kicking the cohorn, cursing it, making it obey them and

CUT TO

WINTHROP, crying out --

WINTHROP
Open -- fire -- now!
(and as his cannons start to boom --)

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD AND BONNET, carefully aiming their cohorn, firing a cannister shell and then --

CUT TO

THE MAIN SKYSAIL OF WINTHROP'S SHIP as the cohorn's sharp metal pieces rip through the canvas, shredding it in a dozen different places, and as the sail flaps uselessly --

CUT TO

WINTHROP, startled, staring up and

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD AND BONNET, firing again, and

CUT TO

THIS TIME THE MAINSAIL OF WINTHROP'S SHIP as BLACKBEARD AND BONNET strike again, the huge sail ripped to pieces, and

CUT TO

THE GIANT SHIP and there's no question about it, it's not going as fast as it was and

CUT TO

ISRAEL at the tiller, and ahead now is open sea and

CUT TO

THE COHORN firing again and now

CUT TO

WINTHROP's fore sail, ripped to shreds and

CUT TO

THE ADVENTURE, holding its own against the GIANT SHIP, then slowly, starting to widen the gap and pull away and

CUT TO

WINTHROP, raging as he realizes what's happening and

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD AND BONNET, triumphant as they realize what's happening and

CUT TO

SOMETHING NOBODY EVER SAW BEFORE as holy shit, BLACKBEARD'S SHIP roars right into an unseen sand bar and immediately starts to tilt the hell over and

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD AND BONNET, grabbing for the rail of the fighting top as the ship continues to keel over and they're hanging in space for their lives --

CUT TO

THE DECK OF THE ADVENTURE and it's madness, the thing tilting

over and everything flying ass over teacups, people grabbing onto anything they can for support and

CUT TO

WINTHROP, he's got them now, he's won and he knows it until --

CUT TO

Holy shit, now WINTHROP'S SHIP piles dead into another underwater sand bar and

CUT TO

THE DECK OF THE GIANT SHIP, as it starts to topple over too, everything flying all the hell over, people screaming and grabbing and

CUT TO

ISRAEL AND WALPOLE, hanging to the tiller for their lives and you never heard such noise and shouting and

CUT TO

THE GIANT SHIP, tilting over more, more and

CUT TO

THE ADVENTURE, tilting more, but more slowly now and

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD AND BONNET, panting, crawling back over the rail of the fighting top which isn't a hundred feet high anymore -- it's straight out over the water and maybe thirty feet up.

CUT TO

THE GIANT SHIP as it too slows its tilting and finally comes to a halt.

CUT TO

A LONG SHOT OF THE SITUATION AND IT'S THIS: The two ships are tilted on different sand bars in different directions, perhaps 250 yards away from each other. Both have been damaged, but both are still seaworthy. If they were upright, that is. Both ships are tilted way more than 45-degree angles.

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD AND BONNET, scrambling along the rigging back down toward the deck. Although strictly speaking, they're not going "down," but almost parallel with the water. Things aboard ship are not, at the moment, tidy.

CUT TO

ISRAEL, who is clinging to the rail, checking things out as BLACKBEARD makes his way to him.

BLACKBEARD
How long 'til rising tide?

ISRAEL
Three hours at a guess.

BLACKBEARD
That gives us three hours to prepare for battle -- whichever ship the tide lifts first...
(beat)
...wins...

BONNET
It looks like it's going to be them...

CUT TO

WINTHROP AND THE ROWER.

THE ROWER
I think they're stuck more deeply, sir.
(WINTHROP nods)

CUT TO

THE SHOT OF THE TWO TILTED SHIPS. Nothing has changed. It's later in the afternoon.

CUT TO

WINTHROP'S MEN, carrying armloads of cannonballs, making their precarious way along the tilted deck, setting them down near the cannons. Everything on both ships is sideways so movement is precarious and slow.

CUT TO

BONNET AND BLACKBEARD, sitting, thinking, staring, not doing a goddam thing at all and

CUT TO

WINTHROP, supervising the gathering of dozens of large tubs of water, the same kind we saw used earlier to soak blankets in to prevent fire --

CUT TO

BONNET, frustrated, lost, staring around and

CUT TO

THE SUN, STILL LATER.

CUT TO

THE HULL OF BLACKBEARD'S SHIP, stuck on the sand bar and

CUT TO

THE GIANT SHIP'S HULL, also stuck, but not as badly and

CUT TO

WINTHROP overseeing the greasing of his cannons.

CUT TO

BONNET. CLOSE UP. TRIUMPHANT -- and he's got it!

BONNET
(whirling on BLACKBEARD)
Everything, <u>everything</u> -- overboard -- we must lighten the ship --
(and on that last word --)

CUT TO

BONNET, throwing a barrel of food over the side of his ship and as it drifts away

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

BLACKBEARD AND HIS CREW, carrying whatever they can; food, blankets, buckets -- everything but ammunition, of course -- and pitching it into the water and

CUT TO

THE WATER by BLACKBEARD's boat and it's starting to get crowded as things float away and

CUT TO

WINTHROP, watching as his men make battle preparations.

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD'S SHIP and clothes fly overboard and tables and chairs and rope and benches and

CUT TO

WINTHROP, peering over at his hull, still stuck in sand. But maybe not quite so much -- he seems kind of pleased.

CUT TO

BONNET, peering over the hull, still stuck in sand. And nothing has changed. He is distraught as we

CUT TO

THE WATER BEHIND BLACKBEARD'S BOAT and the whole river is filling with debris now, as everything that wasn't nailed down is pitched and as the men continue to work

CUT TO

THE SUN IN THE SKY AND THE TWO BOATS. The tide is now just starting to rise as we

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD, getting desperate, as his men still throw things overboard, but nothing seems to help. BONNET is in growing despair --

CUT TO

THE TIDE, rising a little bit more and

CUT TO

WINTHROP'S CREW, YOUNG VIRGINIANS not experienced, tense. Then --

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD. Suddenly a strange look -- the men at peace -- he takes out his giant cutlass and we

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD, moving up the deck toward one of his cannons, and these were, of course, because of their recoil, attached to the rails by thick ropes and now BLACKBEARD begins hacking at those restraining ropes with the cutlass edge and

CUT TO

ISRAEL, confused, watching, and

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD, hacking wildly and as the last rope gives --

CUT TO

THE GIANT CANNON, loose, beginning to slide all the way down the deck and it makes a hell of a noise and goes faster and faster and

CUT TO

THE FAR RAIL AS THE CANNON blasts into it and

CUT TO

THE WATER as the cannon breaks through the rail, shatters it and falls into the water with a Titanic splash and

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD'S SHIP as slowly, almost imperceptibly, it begins to straighten and

CUT TO

THE TIDE, coming in more strongly now and

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD hacking another giant cannon free and BONNET has started on the next cannon.

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD'S CANNON, rolling faster and faster across the deck of the ship, blasting through the rail into the water and

CUT TO

BONNET'S CANNON rolling thunderously down and

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD'S SHIP, straighter now and

CUT TO

THE TIDE, coming in more fully and

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD hacking and BONNET hacking.

CUT TO

ISRAEL making his way in the direction of the tiller and

CUT TO

TWO MORE CANNONS, splashing together into the water and

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD AND BONNET in a frenzy, attacking the final cannons and as they start to roll --

CUT TO

THE TIDE, coming in strongly and

CUT TO

THE LAST CANNONS CRASHING THROUGH THE RAILS and

CUT TO

THE ADVENTURE, upright at last, and slowly it leaves the sand bar, starts to sail free and

CUT TO

WINTHROP AND THE ROWER. His ship is pretty much still where it was, stuck at right angles. He watches in silent fury as BLACKBEARD's ship rights itself.

ROWER
He won, sir.

WINTHROP
He won nothing -- he won the right to die this day --
(pointing out)
-- see? -- to reach open sea he must come into our trajectories -- especially now --
(and on that)

CUT TO

THE DECK OF WINTHROP'S SHIP -- still tilted of course -- but the cannons that face open sea are at a much higher angle than they ever would be ordinarily --

CUT TO

WINTHROP -- he smiles.

WINTHROP
Have you seen bloodshed?
(THE ROWER hasn't)
Today you'll be a man.

CUT TO

ISRAEL at the tiller -- staring off at the stranded giant ship. BLACKBEARD, BONNET AND WALPOLE surround him.

ISRAEL
There's no safe way to get past Winthrop. Shall we wait for darkness?

BLACKBEARD
And risk another sandbar?
(shakes his head)

BONNET
Theirs is the faster ship -- distance is our only ally.

BLACKBEARD
We have to risk it.
(to the crew --)
Prepare for fires!

CUT TO

THE PIRATE CREW, and they know what they might be in for -- they carry blankets and tubs of water, preparing for what might come.

CUT TO

ISRAEL, WALPOLE beside him, at the tiller, an eye on the tilted giant ship, as he alters course as best he can, trying to get to open sea in the distance.

CUT TO

WINTHROP. In the VIRGINIAN. He stands in the midst of his cannons that are pointed high in the air -- the arcs will be considerable.

His crew of young Virginians is very tense indeed.

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD'S CREW. The same. No one knows what's about to happen.

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD AND BONNET. They don't either.

BONNET
If only we could attack them --

BLACKBEARD
(gesturing to where the cannons were -- he shrugs --)
-- today is our day for running...
(now <u>cannon fire</u> and)

CUT TO

THE SKY -- a shell arcs through the air --

-- and lands -- <u>way</u> beyond BLACKBEARD's ship. Missed by a mile.

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD'S CREW. Relieved.

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD -- the reverse of relieved -- he knows what's coming --

CUT TO

WINTHROP and he knows what's coming too -- his cannons are being lowered and as he signals for them to fire --

CUT TO

THE WATER beyond BLACKBEARD'S SHIP as the shell lands -- closer and now, very quickly, a series of cuts --

-- we see WINTHROP'S CANNONS firing --

-- we see shells landing on BLACKBEARD's deck --

-- and we see fires --

-- and we see WALPOLE rushing to help --

-- and we see BONNET is already there in the thick of it --

-- and we see ISRAEL, fighting the tiller, veering away from the VIRGINIAN as best he can --

-- and we see THE VIRGINIAN'S CREW, looking out at the burning ship --

-- and we see THE PIRATE CREW and it's dangerous but they've done this before and they fight the fires as best they can --

-- and we see WINTHROP ordering more cannon fire --

-- and the shells arc through the skies --

-- and land short now -- but they've done their damage --

-- and ISRAEL suddenly rushes away, abandoning the tiller --

-- and BONNET suddenly rushes away, abandoning the fires --

-- and MR. WALPOLE turns pale --

-- and BLACKBEARD lies bloody and devastated on the deck where a shell has exploded.

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD, staring up, blood pouring --

-- and he's in <u>a rage</u>.

He lies there, bloody from God knows how many wounds -- and growling.

CUT TO

BONNET AND MR. WALPOLE AND ISRAEL, as they do their best to mask their feelings, kneel around him.

BONNET
-- lie still --

BLACKBEARD
...help me up ...

BONNET
-- we must stop the bleeding --

BLACKBEARD
-- do -- as -- I -- say!

There is no choice -- they lift him to his feet. He looks around.

CUT TO

THE DECK. The fires are being brought under control.

CUT TO

THE FOUR. BLACKBEARD cannot stand alone -- MR. WALPOLE AND ISRAEL prop him up while BONNET starts on his wounds --

ISRAEL
(brusque)
-- I've seen you worse, this is nothing.

BONNET
Open sea, Israel.

ISRAEL
Done.
(he starts off)

BLACKBEARD
...no...

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD. CLOSE UP.

BLACKBEARD
...I do not run twice in one day...

CUT TO

THE OTHERS, looking at him. The blood still pours.

BONNET
You're not fit to command just now. Israel -- open sea.

BLACKBEARD
Stede...
(BONNET looks at him)
...don't do this to me...
(beat)
...I may die tomorrow...Winthrop must die today ...

BONNET
We have no weapons, remember?

BLACKBEARD
(long pause. Then --)
...And I am Blackbeard, remember...? and Blackbeard is never unarmed...
(now, from them --)

CUT TO

THE VIRGINIAN. WINTHROP AND THE ROWER watching as BLACKBEARD'S SHIP sails away toward open sea.

There is a GREAT WALL OF ROCK with an opening -- beyond the opening, open sea begins.

THE ROWER
They're running for open sea, sir.

WINTHROP
Of course they are -- but it will do them no good -- they will run, but we will find them. They will beg, but they will die.
(he looks out at the retreating ship. Very much at peace. As he begins to whistle --)

CUT TO

THE SUN. Just starting to fall now. Pretty soon: dusk.

CUT TO

THE VIRGINIAN. It is still caught in the sand bar, but not as tilted over as before.

CUT TO

THE CREW, standing bunched as, in front of them, WINTHROP prepares to speak.

WINTHROP
I realize this is the first night many of you have ever spent at sea, so I want to alert you as to what is expected of you.

CUT TO

WINTHROP. A very assured man.

WINTHROP
We have dropped anchor and will remain precisely where we are 'til dawn. At that time you will begin to...
(he is aware of something now: no one is listening)

CUT TO

THE YOUNG CREW. They are all of them looking off in the same direction. And they are unquestionably a bit concerned at what they see.

CUT TO

THE GIANT WALL OF ROCK. And in the opening now, something is visible --

-- BLACKBEARD'S SHIP is sailing back into view.

CUT TO

WINTHROP as he sees it. And for a moment, uncertain. Then --

WINTHROP
All right, let's get ready.

THE ROWER
Ready for what, sir?
(WINTHROP says nothing, just shakes his head as we --)

CUT TO

THE SUN. Lower.

CUT TO

THE REVENGE. Still out of range -- it sails directly behind the VIRGINIAN now --

-- and now stops.

CUT TO

THE ROWER. What the hell is going on?

CUT TO

A BUNCH OF YOUNG VIRGINIANS -- they are the ones who were ransomed -- and they are not a bunch of happy campers just now.

CUT TO

THE SKY. It's getting darker. Fast.

THE GROUP OF YOUNG VIRGINIANS THAT WERE RANSOMED. They are worse. Now THE ROWER joins them. Nervously, they start to talk low and fast and

CUT TO

WINTHROP. Edgy, very tense. Walking up, he glares at them --

-- they split apart.

GOVERNOR WINTHROP
(to THE ROWER)
What was that?

THE ROWER
They were just remembering that Mister Blackbeard let them go -- they have nothing personally against him -- and he gave me rum to drink -- he didn't have to do that.

GOVERNOR WINTHROP
Wetting in your pants, the bunch of you.
(he looks at THE ROWER with scorn, moves away as we --)

CUT TO

THE ROWER, alone now. He moves so he can look out --

CUT TO

WHAT HE SEES -- THE ADVENTURE -- deserted. Nothing visible --

CUT TO

THE ROWER. Suddenly very upset as we

CUT TO

THE ADVENTURE. Because still with no one visible, it starts to move --

-- and it isn't moving away.

Slowly, it begins to come up behind the GIANT SHIP and

CUT TO

THE YOUNG VIRGINIANS -- staring out -- terrified --

CUT TO

THE MAIN DECK OF THE SUPERSHIP AND THE CREW IS ALL staring out. These are not pirates, they are young men --

-- and they don't want to be here.

CUT TO

WINTHROP -- bellowing into a megaphone --

GOVERNOR WINTHROP
This is nothing -- a pirate trick to try and unnerve us --
(big)
-- prepare to fight!

CUT TO

THE CREW -- they don't much want to do that. As they stare --

CUT TO

THE ADVENTURE. It is coming silently nearer, nearer --

-- the sun is behind THE ADVENTURE. It is all beginning to look very strange.

CUT TO

THE YOUNG VIRGINIANS, coming to THE ROWER.

FIRST YOUNG VIRGINIAN
Why isn't he firing at us?

THE ROWER
I don't know.

SECOND YOUNG VIRGINIAN
His cannons will set us afire. I don't want to burn to death --

SECOND YOUNG VIRGINIAN
I have nothing against Mister Blackbeard.

THE ROWER
Nothing against him? I like him -- he gave me rum to drink -- he was as fine a killer as you could ever hope to meet --

And suddenly he freezes.

Everybody freezes --

-- they stare out --

-- cock their heads --

-- listening --

-- because now a sound has come from BLACKBEARD'S SHIP -- a sound they've never heard --

-- a great animal roar --

-- panic begins on the GIANT SHIP --

CUT TO

WINTHROP. Bellowing out.

GOVERNOR WINTHROP
Do not be fooled -- they are just trying to unnerve us -- but we will not let that happen --

CUT TO

THE CREW. Sorry, but it has already happened. The crew mills around -- you can tell they are ready to bolt --

-- now, A VOICE replaces the roar.

VOICE (OVER)
...abandon ship...or die...The Devil bids you choose...

THE CREW is frozen --

CUT TO

WINTHROP. Things are getting dicey and he knows it --

GOVERNOR WINTHROP
(shouting)
This is nothing! a show! -- do not be fooled! There -- is -- no -- Devil --

CUT TO

THE ADVENTURE. Still deserted. Still coming closer.

VOICE (OVER)
...The Devil wants your blood...

CUT TO

THE YOUNG VIRGINIANS AND THE CREW.

All they want to do is suck their thumbs and now --

CUT TO

THE ADVENTURE.

Pirates hidden everywhere -- ISRAEL, lying flat, is working the tiller with a wire attached to the wheel and --

VOICE (OVER)
THE DEVIL IS COMING FOR YOU -- THE DEVIL WILL BATHE IN YOUR BLOOD.
(and on that --)

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD'S CABIN. BLACKBEARD AND BONNET AND MR. WALPOLE. MR. WALPOLE, in the doorway, looks concerned. BONNET looks a lot more than that --

-- BLACKBEARD, who has been roaring out the porthole, turns from it, finds a chair, and collapses.

He looks awful. The bleeding has stopped, but he is pale, perspiring. He has, for the first time, very little strength.

This is all the more noticeable because he has begun to be costumed to look as he did when we first saw him -- the braided hair, curled, and tossed over his shoulders, is already in place.

BONNET
We can still sail away.

BLACKBEARD
(shakes his head)
I'll be all right.
(to BONNET)
Help me up.

BONNET takes him, all but lifts him from the chair.

BLACKBEARD weaves a bit, manages to find his balance.

BLACKBEARD
(voice soft)
Get me ready.
(as they set to work --)

CUT TO

THE GIANT SHIP. WINTHROP watches as the ADVENTURE keeps coming closer. For the first time, his fear starts to show.

CUT TO

THE YOUNG VIRGINIANS AND THE ROWER -- pale.

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD'S CABIN. BONNET AND MR. WALPOLE are alone.

BONNET
It's not humanly possible.

MR. WALPOLE
Whoever said he was human?

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD. Alone in the shadows, gathering himself. For a moment, he sags. His wounds have reopened. It's too hard, even for him. Then --

BLACKBEARD
(whispered)
I only ask the strength...for this last battle...

CUT TO

THE YOUNG VIRGINIANS -- entering nightmare.

FIRST YOUNG VIRGINIAN
(pointing)
-- what is that? -- WHAT IS THAT? --

CUT TO

THE ADVENTURE --

-- and here he comes -- as when we first saw him -- his pistols in his sash, his mighty cutlass gripped in one hand, his eyes blaze with lust and fury --

-- the rope candles make flames around his face -- the setting sun outlines him --

-- right now, he just might be the Devil --

-- he rubs his hand across his shirt, pulls it away bloody -- and now puts his bloody hands to his face, tastes it --

-- smiles, roars a terrible sound of triumph and

CUT TO

THE ROWER AND THE OTHERS.

THE ROWER
He told me -- when the flames were around his face, I would die -- screaming --

SECOND YOUNG VIRGINIAN
-- what else did he say? --

THE ROWER
-- shit, that's enough for me --

-- and he goes to the rail, climbs over, jumps, starts swimming for shore and --

-- and after a beat, THE OTHER YOUNG VIRGINIANS start to do the same and --

CUT TO

WINTHROP, staring around, as his crew starts to disappear on him, everybody taking off over the side and

CUT TO

THE ADVENTURE --

-- boarding distance now and

CUT TO

GRAPPLING HOOKS arcing through the air and

CUT TO

WINTHROP, alone, watching -- he has pistols now along with his sword and he's moving near the main mast of his ship which is still pointed out over the water, almost parallel with it and

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD AND BONNET, boarding the GIANT SHIP and

CUT TO

WINTHROP starts to climb into the rigging, stops for a moment, fires, again and again, misses, climbs on.

CUT TO

THE RIGGING, and WINTHROP, climbing higher -- although it isn't higher, it would be if the ship were upright -- but he's climbing away and

CUT TO

BONNET, leaving BLACKBEARD, racing toward the rigging, starting to climb and

CUT TO

WINTHROP, climbing more deeply into the rigging and

CUT TO

BONNET, climbing fast after him and

CUT TO

THE RIGGING as BONNET begins to close and WINTHROP fires, misses and BONNET, unmindful that WINTHROP has another gun continues to close in and

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD, staring up at the battle in the rigging and there is the sound of WINTHROP firing and

CUT TO

THE RIGGING, and this time WINTHROP didn't miss, BONNET is bleeding from the left arm but that doesn't matter, he doesn't stop and as WINTHROP raises his gun to fire again --

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD. CLOSE UP. Shouting --

BLACKBEARD
(stunned)
Christ! --
(and now --)

CUT TO

THE REASON FOR HIS ASTONISHMENT AND IT'S THIS: THE VIRGINIAN is suddenly free from the sandbar and as that happens --

CUT TO

SOMETHING WE'VE NEVER SEEN BEFORE -- the rigging, first slowly then faster and faster -- starts to right itself. Like a cork released from a bottle, the entire huge mast goes from being horizontal to being vertical and

CUT TO

BONNET AND WINTHROP -- rising up into the air --

-- <u>waaaay</u> up into the air --

-- because as the mast rises it takes them right along with it and BONNET holds to a rope for very dear life while WINTHROP loses his pistol but finds a rope of his own and

CUT TO

BONNET AND WINTHROP, suddenly hanging from ropes, eighty feet up in the air --

CUT TO

WINTHROP. Looks down -- not a smart move -- he was terrified before but now he's worse and desperately he begins to scramble down --

CUT TO

BONNET, tracking him --

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD, pulling himself to his feet, watching their descent. MR. WALPOLE AND ISRAEL are with him now and they watch too as we

CUT TO

WINTHROP, hand over hand, getting to the safety of the deck and

CUT TO

BONNET. Flying down alongside, easily keeping pace and

CUT TO

THE DECK as WINTHROP drops to it, quickly takes out his sword -- he is a wonderful swordsman, experienced and strong.

CUT TO

BONNET, his sword in his hand. We have never seen him do this before.

CUT TO

WINTHROP AND BONNET as their duel begins, and WINTHROP is confident and quick and takes command, easily forcing BONNET back and back and

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD AND ISRAEL, watching and worried and

CUT TO

MR. WALPOLE. He seems barely perturbed and now we find out why as we

CUT TO

BONNET, flashing through the dusk -- guess what? --

-- he is a <u>master</u>!

WINTHROP makes a move --

-- blocked.

WINTHROP tries another move --

-- blocked! --

-- and now <u>blocked again</u> --

CUT TO

WINTHROP, confidence gone, and he begins to retreat and

CUT TO

BONNET and now he moves in --

-- and his sword dances --

-- and WINTHROP is bleeding from the shoulder --

-- and now WINTHROP is bleeding from his sword arm --

-- his hand opens --

-- his sword drops to the deck.

WINTHROP, stunned, tries to back away.

CUT TO

BONNET. CLOSE UP. MOVING IN FOR THE KILL.

BONNET
I could kill you just for the general good of mankind --

CUT TO

WINTHROP, backing away faster --

CUT TO

BONNET. CLOSE UP. MOVING IN.

BONNET
Or for the insults you have showered on me with such relish -- or for burning my ship --
(beat)
-- but I think the reason you're going to die is you like to fire at unarmed men. You enjoy slaughter.
(beat)
Well...<u>so</u> <u>do</u> <u>I</u>. Beg me for your life --

CUT TO

WINTHROP -- his back is against the deck railing, no further to retreat. And now he starts to come apart at the seams --

GOVERNOR WINTHROP
I have no problem with that --

CUT TO

BONNET, studying WINTHROP. Then he turns to BLACKBEARD.

BONNET
Over to you.

CUT TO

WINTHROP as BLACKBEARD, giant sword in hand, moves in slowly.

GOVERNOR WINTHROP
You're armed -- I have nothing--

BLACKBEARD
(stops)
You're right -- that isn't fair.
(stoops, tosses WINTHROP his sword from the deck)

CUT TO

BONNET, watching as WINTHROP grabs his thin-bladed sword. Then BLACKBEARD does an amazing thing.

BLACKBEARD
(to BONNET)
Hold this for me.
(and he hands BONNET his own giant sword, leaving him totally unarmed)
Much fairer now.

CUT TO

WINTHROP, sword in hand, as BLACKBEARD walks slowly toward him. WINTHROP looks around, wondering what the trick is -- then as he realizes there isn't one, he strikes, and

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD, grabbing the blade in his hands, ripping the sword free, snapping the blade in half, tossing it back.

BLACKBEARD
Too slow. Try again.

CUT TO

BONNET, watching as WINTHROP, in blind panic, strikes again.

Too slow. BLACKBEARD grabs the remains of his weapon, snaps most of the rest of the blade off, holds it tight --

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD. He stares at the remains of WINTHROP'S SWORD -- only a few inches of steel left -- but it is jagged and sharp.

CUT TO

WINTHROP -- blind panic now --

BLACKBEARD
(starts low, a rumble)
Do you know what wild animals do before the kill...?
(he fingers the sharp short blade)
...they slash the stomachs of their victims open...
(he slashes WINTHROP's shirt open)
...and pull out the heart...and eat it...

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD. Louder.

BLACKBEARD
...with the victim still alive...watching...

CUT TO

WINTHROP. Color gone, eyes wild --

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD. CLOSE UP.

BLACKBEARD
...your last sight on earth will be of me
...biting into your heart...your blood will spurt...my lips will curl...
(beat)
...I will be smiling...
(and as he presses the sword point against WINTHROP's skin)

CUT TO

WINTHROP. And suddenly he just dies. His heart stops. His body empties. He slumps to the deck, still. His eyes wide open and staring.

CUT TO

BONNET AND MR. WALPOLE, moving over him.

BONNET
Death by fear.

MR. WALPOLE
Such a pretty disease.

ISRAEL (OVER)
(so soft)
Aw no...
(and on those sad words)

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD as he falls. He is bleeding terribly. His breath comes unevenly. It's almost over.

CUT TO

BONNET, terribly moved, going to BLACKBEARD, cradling his head as gently as he can.

BLACKBEARD
...Stede...
(his eyes are rolling up into his head now. He forces them back)

BONNET
Here, Ed.

BLACKBEARD
...it really does get dark...

BONNET
Don't be afraid.

BLACKBEARD
I'm not afraid, you ass. I just hate not being able to spend my money.

BONNET
What would you have spent it on?
(he gestures sharply --)

CUT TO

THE MUSICIANS. They start to play, soft and slow; the tune is haunting.

CUT TO

THE CREW. PACKED IN ALL AROUND. Disbelief and terrible sadness.

CUT TO

ISRAEL. Fighting tears. MR. WALPOLE does his best to console him.

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD AND BONNET.

BLACKBEARD
...I would have gone to your mansion...and brought the Vision...and dressed her in lady's clothes...I would have drunk French wine instead of that rotten rum I've always had...
(beat, soft)
...I wanted to be a gentleman, Stede...
(faint now)
...I wanted to be remembered...
(his eyes roll up, his arms go limp. BONNET continues to cradle his head)

THE SUN is almost gone now.

THE WIND ruffles the sails...

THE MUSICIANS' SONG is even sadder

THE CREW is devastated.

ISRAEL is worse than that.

BONNET rises, drained, goes to the rail, stares out at the last of the sun...

MR. WALPOLE is beside him, where he has always been, will always be.

HOLD ON THE MOMENT.

KEEP HOLDING.

KEEP HOLDING UNTIL BLACKBEARD BELCHES.

CUT TO

BLACKBEARD, rising to one elbow.

BLACKBEARD
Stede! -- guess what? -- it wasn't death after all, it was indigestion.

And as BONNET goes to him, helps him up --

-- <u>thunderous applause</u>.

THE ENTIRE CREW IS APPLAUDING. ISRAEL loudest of all.

MR. WALPOLE
Unfair -- I was much more moving.
(he shrugs, starts to applaud too)
Oh well...

AS THE APPLAUSE BUILDS AND BUILDS AND KEEPS ON BUILDING --

QUICK CUT TO

BONNET'S MANSION. A perfect day.

HERE COMES MR. WALPOLE -- he has a native girl on his arm and she is lovely --

-- and here comes ISRAEL -- his native girl is also lovely and not only that, she's got a limp.

And now THE WIDOW TYLER AND THE VISION -- beautifully dressed and smiling.

THEY ARE ALL APPLAUDING TOO and now we see why --

BLACKBEARD AND BONNET STAND STARING AT A HUGE DOUBLE PORTRAIT OF BLACKBEARD AND BONNET. IT IS A FABULOUS WORK.

NOW HOLD.

HOLD ON THE LEGENDS IN THE PAINTING AND ON THE LEGENDS IN LIFE. BLACKBEARD LOOKS LIKE BONNET NOW, BONNET LOOKS LIKE BLACKBEARD...

...AND THEY BOTH LOOK VERY VERY HAPPY.

FINAL FADE OUT.